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THE ADVENTURES OF
MR. LEDBURY.

THE ADVENTURES

OF

MR. LEDBURY

AND

HIS FRIEND JACK JOHNSON.

BY

ALBERT SMITH,

AUTHOR OF "THE SCATTERGOOD FAMILY," "THE POTTLETON LEGACY," ETC.

PUBLISHED BY
BAINBRIDGE'S
LINCOLN.

LONDON:

RICHARD EDWARD KING,

88, CURTAIN ROAD, E.C.

£ 180 / 7

PRINTED BY
RICHARD EDWARD KING, CURTAIN ROAD,
LONDON

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THE
ADVENTURES OF MR. LEDBURY
AND
HIS FRIEND JACK JOHNSON.

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CHAPTER I.

WHICH INTRODUCES THE HEROES TO THE READER.

MR. LEDBURY was a pale young gentleman of four-and-twenty, residing at Islington, having short, light curly hair, a very smooth face, and no whiskers, being short-sighted, and standing about five feet eleven in his improved Albert-boots ("gent's new style"), and one inch less in his pumps. He inclined to ginger-beer, tea, cider, and other harmless beverages that suited his mild idiosyncrasy; he rose early, took long walks on fine afternoons to Hampstead and other suburban ruralities; played the flute a little; subscribed to a knowledge-diffusing periodical; called Harley "a very humorous performer," and thought Mrs. Nesbitt a "very fascinating actress." Perhaps our readers will now recognise him; indeed, we think some of them have met him before.

The season was over, and all Mr. Ledbury's friends—for he had a very large connection—were leaving town. The Simpsons had started, *per Batavier*, for Langen Schwalbach; his own family were located at Herne Bay; the Grimleys had been heard of in Brittany; the Smiths had gone to Margate; and the Smythes to Naples; indeed, all were off to spend money, to retrench, to court publicity, or to be out of the way. Mr. Ledbury himself had dreamt of Gravesend and a cheap lodging near Windmill hill, having suffered from a mild attack of the epidemic which seizes all our compatriots at this period, and produces the results of their experiences, during the next publishing season, under the titles of "A summer amongst the Boarding-houses and the Shrimps," "The Idler in Worthing," "A ride on a donkey to Pegwell Bay, by a Lady," "Rottingdean; its Manufactures and Political Resources," and many others of the same class. But where to go was now the question, and rather difficult it was

to answer—not because he was *blasé* with having travelled everywhere, but simply because he had never been anywhere. But chance at last determined him to the great undertaking we are about to chronicle.

Had Mr. Ledbury been a young man of fortune he would have dined at a club whilst his family were out of town; as he was not, he chose an eating-house, for being, in common with man in general, naturally gregarious, he loved to feed in flocks; and there was a restaurant which he frequented in a street near the West End, for the sake of the walk, and because it touched on the limits of fashion. From one o'clock daily until six, joints of tempting richness smoked in the windows; indeed, the very odour that stole out into the streets seemed to possess peculiarly nourishing powers, to judge from the hungry crowd that surrounded the premises. In the morning, the appearance of the eating-house was not so tempting as at a more advanced period of the day. Strange cold meats, of unintelligible origin and extraordinary shape, were exposed to view, with the remnants of yesterday's bill of fare on small plates. Round tough puddings, studded with plums at uncertain intervals, reposed with an air of indigestible solidity upon white and greasy earthenware dishes; and the soup-tureens were filled with a singular coagulation, resembling small pieces of fat and carrots set in dirty glue. But towards afternoon the scene was changed; the cold joints had all departed—we believe it was never known where—steaming legs and rounds supplied their places, and a portion of the window was partitioned off for the reception of verdant-looking mustard and cress, ornamented with rings of beet-root and sticks of celery in tasteful combination.

Mr. Ledbury was of an inquiring turn of mind. He belonged to a Literary and Scientific Institution in the neighbourhood; and, by attending all the lectures thereat, delivered with unremitting regularity, had acquired that happy jumble of the various branches of Natural Philosophy which such a practice generally induces. Hence there was one circumstance in this eating-house which constantly exercised his reflective powers: the joints in the window were always hot and smoking. He never could imagine by what secret acquaintance with the power of controlling the radiation of caloric (as he termed it) this advantage was gained; nothing short of the skill of Herr Dobler or the Wizard of the North could accomplish it. The joints not only sent up a light vapour, as hot joints generally do, but they were encompassed in a perfect cloud of steam, which, besides rising like incense when they were first placed in the oval pewter hollows formed in the window for their reception, kept on smoking all day until they were cut down to the bone; and then the bone itself steamed away just as comfortably as if it still had its full compliment of meat. Nay, when the bone itself had disappeared, the vapour ascended just the same from the spot it had occupied, as furiously as from the plum-puddings of gigantic dimensions whilom used in pantomimic banquets, to the great admiration of the little boys in dilapidated envelopes who clustered round the window, and pointed out to each other what they should like to have.

There was a gentleman of a very vivacious turn of mind who constantly dined at this eating-house, at the same table and about the same hour that Mr. Ledbury visited it. He was commonly known as "Jack Johnson"—no one ever presuming to add "*Mr.*" to the appellation; and he was just the sort of person you would imagine an everybody's Jack Johnson to be. He could play singlestick, make punch, slang coal-heavers, drive hack-cabs, and sing comic songs better than anybody else in London. There was not a night-tavern at which he was not as well-known as the head-waiter or the glee-singing chairman. He could always get orders for any of the theatres. He was seen one night at an evening party in Bryanstone Square, and the next at a shilling ball at the Lowther Rooms; at one time he might be spied out in the gallery at Covent Garden, and at another in the stage-box; on Monday eating *beignets de pêches* at Vêry's; on Wednesday, discussing haricot mutton at Berthollini's; and on Friday dining from alamode beef in Holborn—and all with the same relish. In fact, he was one of those extraordinary conglomerations of antithetical attributes constantly turning up in the great world, like the water-rockets at the Surrey Zoological Gardens—sparkling about for a space of time in extreme brilliancy, anon disappearing for an equal period from all observation, and then coming up again at a place where they were never expected, and flourishing about as lively and eccentric as ever.

Mr. Ledbury was on terms of intimate acquaintance with Jack Johnson, although the two were as different in their dispositions as a bottle of champagne and a tin of Devonshire cream; and they always enjoyed a little conversation when they met—Mr. Ledbury usually commencing by a few mild meteorological observations, which Jack Johnson generally replied to by asking his opinion of things in general, and the Romans in particular—questions, it must certainly be admitted, involving much theory and ingenious speculation.

"It's very hot," observed Mr. Ledbury one warm day towards the end of August, as he seated himself at the accustomed table.

"Uncommonly," said Johnson: "and so is this cold meat—I mean to cut it soon. Where do you think of going?"

"I had an idea of visiting Gravesend," gently replied Ledbury.

"Ugh!" said Mr. Johnson, expressing disgust; "don't go there. Nasty place—swarms with hot clerks—bad bathing too—neither fresh nor salt, but a dash of both!"

"But they say the living is cheap there?"

"Oh, nonsense!" was the reply. "You get overdone with shrimps—nothing else to be had at times, upon my honour. Shrimps for breakfast, dinner, and tea—potted shrimps, shrimp-puddings, shrimp-soup—the very pastry-cooks make their tarts of shrimp-jam, and think nothing so fine as shrimp-ices."

"How very odd!" observed Mr. Ledbury. "I never heard that before."

"Fact, sir!" continued Jack. "Why don't you go to France? I'm going, and anywhere else chance may take me. Suppose you come too."

Mr. Ledbury was a little aghast; the thoughts of a Continental tour had never entered his head in his wildest dreams of travel. He inquired—

“Will it not be very expensive?”

“Oh, no,” answered Jack. “I know Paris very well. Things are as cheap as dirt there if you know where to buy them. Velvet hats sixpence apiece; kid gloves four sous (that’s twopence); and glazed boots half-a-crown a pair; lodgings five shillings a month.”

“That certainly is very reasonable,” said Mr. Ledbury. “I should think, though, that the lodgings are not very great things at that rate.”

“They are very comfortable, though,” answered Jack. “They let you keep dogs in them, and rabbits, and—in fact, anything you like.”

“I have read about Paris in the guide-books.”

“Ah! I should think so. Guide-books are collections of lies half-bound in cloth to deceive travellers. You never find much in them to be of service. Take Mrs. Starke with you, follow her directions, and see where they will lead you—that’s all.”

Mr. Ledbury, not having a very clear idea as to who Mrs. Starke was, relapsed into silence.

“Paris is a perpetual holiday,” continued Mr. Johnson, “a large tub of fun always running over.”

“But I don’t know the language very well.”

“Oh, you’ll learn it quickly. Go to the balls, and dance with the *grisettes*: they’ll teach you soon enough.”

“What’s a *grisette*?” inquired Ledbury.

“Oh, nice! I believe you,” replied Johnson, winking his eye, and finishing his pint of stout. “A *grisette* is a French translation of a Pantheon stall-girl, with a dash of the milliner, and an occasional sprinkling of the washerwoman and Cranbourne Alley bonnet-seller.”

“What a singular mixture! How I should like to see one!”

Mr. Ledbury’s curiosity was evidently excited, and Jack Johnson, who knew Paris pretty well, and really wanted a companion, painted such glowing pictures of life in the French capital, that after a little persuasion he contrived to talk over Mr. Ledbury to accompany him.

In the course of a few days everything was arranged for their departure, and Jack did not shave any more, but allowed his mustachios to grow as they liked—which proceeding appears to be actually incumbent upon everybody going to France; and Mr. Ledbury, under his directions, procured a flimsy piece of paper, called a passport, from the ambassador in Poland Street, after a pleasant sojourn of three hours in a back parlour, amongst the queerest lot of people possible to conceive. We have obtained a sight of this document, and now place the copy of a portion of it before our readers, feeling assured that they will be thankful for the portrait of our traveller therein drawn forth.

REMARQUES.

A charge d'être présenté aux autorités compétentes.

SIGNALEMENT.

Taille de 5 pieds 10 pouces Anglais.	
Âgé de 24 ans.	
Cheveux	<i>blonds.</i>
Front	<i>ord.</i>
Sourcils	<i>blonds.</i>
Yeux	<i>gris.</i>
Nez	<i>retroussé.</i>
Menton	<i>ronde.</i>
Visage	<i>ovale.</i>
Teint	<i>pâle.</i>

The steam-packets which leave London for the various parts of the Continent have an eccentric and highly diverting plan of abjuring the stated and regular times of departure adopted by most of their contemporaries to Herne Bay and Ramsgate, leaving at all sorts of uncomfortable hours, at their own discretion, generally ranging between midnight and 6 a. m. Accordingly, when they had fixed the day for starting, they ascertained that the *Emerald*, which was to transport them to Boulogne, would leave London at four in the morning; whereupon Jack Johnson intimated that it was all nonsense going to bed, and that they had better enjoy themselves instead—going to bed at any time having been, in Jack's ideas, from time immemorial, an unnecessary and painful affliction. Hereat, they went to the theatre, and subsequently drank much brandy-and-water, and did eat many broiled kidneys, until, as the chimes of St. Magnus struck a quarter to four, they found themselves in Thames Street, close to the wharf at whose side the *Emerald* was lying preparatory to departure.

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CHAPTER II.

THE VOYAGE, AND ARRIVAL AT BOULOGNE.

ALTHOUGH it wanted an hour to sunrise, yet there was a tolerable share of bustle in the neighbourhood of the quay. Trucks were discharging their contents on the floating platform below, passengers were arriving, and lights passing backwards and forwards in the cabin windows showed that they were alive and moving on board; whilst a stream of vapour, visible in the light of the lamps on the bridge, was rising from the spare steam funnel, and breaking into

occasional whiffs as the paddle-wheels sullenly turned a stroke or two backwards and forwards : like a musician indulging in a few notes and runs to himself, that he may ascertain all is right before commencing some great performance.

At length the bell rang for the non-voyagers to go on shore ; the last arrival of passengers and luggage had been stowed away in their proper places, and the ropes being loosened, the *Emerald* moved from the wharf, throwing the water from her paddle-boxes in slow and distinct turns. It was still dusk ; and the reflection from the fires on board the ships in the pool, and at the edge of the wharfs, quivered in long lines upon the surface of the river, only broken by the occasional passage of some heavy craft taking early advantage of the tide. Ponderous market-carts were rumbling over London Bridge, and a coach or two, coming from the up mail-trains of the railway, crossed in the direction of the city, laden with passengers, who, ensconced up to the eyes in shawls, coats, and comforters, vainly endeavoured to entice back a small portion of the slumber which they had left behind at the terminus. But sleep is a sad flirt—the moment you wish for her company she deserts you ; whilst, on the other hand, if you are really anxious to keep awake she will be sure to force herself on you, whether you will or no.

It was rather cold ; so, as soon as the boat was fairly off, Mr. Ledbury accompanied his Mentor down into the fore cabin, where they had determined to go ; Jack Johnson observing that it was some shillings cheaper, and that when they had once paid their passage-money they could migrate where they liked ; and here they deposited themselves with tolerable comfort, amongst some boxes and carpet-bags ; for, as a damp drizzling mist was falling, there was no great inducement to go upon deck, except for those directly concerned in the management of the vessel ; and they had enough to do, keeping a sharp look-out, to prevent her coming in contact with the numbers of barges now thronging up the river. Lights had been suspended from the bowsprit and mast-head, and were now struggling ineffectually with the dull grey of an autumnal morning ; whilst the only token to those below that they were on the alert overhead was an occasional “Ease her !” “Stop her !” “Half a turn ahead !” “Go on !” as obstacles rose in the way of the packet, or disappeared.

The *Emerald* moved on, amidst the crowd of steamers, lighters, colliers, and ships from every part of the world that bordered the space allotted to the water thoroughfare ; or, as it has been termed, in allusion to the unceasing shouting of coal-heavers and swearing of bargemen, “the silent highway.” The docks, warehouses, churches, and manufacturing chimneys receded as the pace was quickened on gaining a clearer road. The outlines of Greenwich Hospital faded in the distance, and were soon supplanted by the flat, uninteresting shores which border the river beyond this point.

“There’s Blackwall !” ejaculated Johnson, looking out through one of the glazed port-holes that form the cabin windows. “Many a prime dinner I have had at the Brunswick, after fourpenn’orth of rop’ on the rail. Do you like whitebait ?”

"I never tasted it," replied Ledbury. "What is it like?"

"Nothing else in the world—little fish, with large eyes and no bones, dried in flour, and drowned in cold punch—ah!"

"And when is the proper time for it?"

"June, sir: the balmy month of June. After that they get out of season—that means the minnows and little dace get in by mistake—no go then—brown bread and tittle-bats."

As they approached Gravesend the preparation of breakfast commenced; and the clinking of the cups and saucers had somewhat of a comfortable sound, inducing them to make a comfortable meal, under the combined influence of inclination and principle. Inclination, because they were favourably disposed towards the shrimps and cold meat; and principle, because they were told a roughish passage was anticipated; and should this prove true it was as well not to allow the stomach to contract upon its empty self—a proceeding of that organ which is occasionally acutely painful. When they had concluded their breakfast they ascended upon deck, and beguiled the time with talking, smoking, and drinking bottled stout, until they arrived off Margate, where they took some people on board.

Up to this point of the journey everything had been tolerably quiet; but on approaching the Foreland the first sensations of qualminess became apparent. The passengers began to retire to the cabins, and compose themselves in dark corners of the same. Others, who could not bear the close atmosphere, wrapped themselves up and stretched out their limbs upon the stools upon deck; whilst a third party seated themselves in a row along the lee-side of the vessel, to be in readiness for any thing chance might bring about. The waves increased in size, and the packet accordingly rose and fell in proportion. Steward's boys were seen hurrying about with glasses of cold brandy-and-water, and solitary biscuits on cheese-plates; and occasionally a mop was lowered by a string into the boiling ocean; or a basin, caught by the wind, now and then performed a journey from one end of the deck to the other, all by itself.

Of course there were several upon whom the motion of the vessel had very little effect: and first and foremost amongst these fortunate individuals was Jack Johnson, who had seated himself upon the roof of the cabin entrance, in company with an apparently interminable bottle of Guinness's stout, watching the invalids, and making sundry pleasant remarks upon things in general to Mr. Ledbury, who felt particularly queer, but was endeavouring to make himself believe that he was perfectly well.

"I wonder," observed Jack Johnson, as he stuck the stout bottle into the pocket of his pea-coat, to keep it from rolling away—"I wonder why stewards of steamboats are always fat, and have all got curly hair?"

"I don't know," replied Mr. Ledbury; "unless constantly being near the fire plumps them up like cooks and wild ducks."

"I rather imagine," continued Johnson, "that they pick up flesh from living amongst hot oil and boiled mutton."

"Oh! don't talk anything about boiled mutton!" said Ledbury, with an air of disgust, and looking like an animated turnip.

"With respect to their curly hair," Johnson remarked, "I cannot offer a theory, unless it be that all their whiskers get blown from their cheeks to the top of their heads by the high winds?"

There was a wild attempt on the part of the steward to establish dinner about one o'clock; but the sea was too rough to allow of such a proceeding; nor was the atmosphere of the cabin sufficiently attractive to tempt anyone down. Our friends, therefore, had some sandwiches on deck; and to do Mr. Ledbury justice, he behaved remarkably well, for the wind was dead against them, and the sea so turbulent that at one time the captain had thoughts of going into Ramsgate harbour for the night. About three o'clock it came on to rain, and Ledbury and his companion nestled beneath the tarpaulin of some woolsacks upon deck; where under the combined influence of the stout, the wind, and the rambles of the previous night, they soon fell asleep. Neither the noise upon deck, the dashing of the waves, the motion of the boat, nor the straining and creaking of her timbers as she laboured through the boiling sea, disturbed them; and they dozed away comfortably until an unusual bustle aroused them from their visions, and they found they were close to the entrance of Boulogne Harbour.

The *Emerald* rolled through the surf on the bar, and in a few minutes came into the comparatively still water between the two barricades of piles which stretch into the sea on either side of the harbour. The bustle on deck consequent upon each passenger endeavouring to pick out his own carpet-bag from amidst one hundred and fifty others, all alike and undirected, aroused our tourists, and they now began to look about them.

"Bless me!" cried Mr. Ledbury, gazing at a figure at the end of the pier in a pepper-and-salt great coat, "there's a French soldier. I wonder what he wears red trousers for?"

"Because the English wear red coats," said Johnson. "You will see everything in France is by the rule of contrary. We take the left side in driving, they take the right; we pay when we get out of a *bus*, they pay upon getting in; we call a pawnbroker 'my uncle,' they call him '*ma tante*'; English washerwomen put the linen into tubs, French ones get into the tubs themselves, and wash the linen in the river."

As the steamer at length stopped at the port, and the plank bridge was thrust out for the passengers to land, a confusion of voices arose, to which the "gabble for the million" that caused the great strike amongst the masons of the Tower of Babel was perfect tranquillity. A chain was stretched along the pier to keep off the crowd, and oblige the passengers to pass through the Douane; and this was thronged, like the ropes of a race-course, by the noisy touters from the various hotels, leaning over, and offering the cards of their respective establishments, with the assurance that each was superior to the other. To keep them quiet, Johnson promised everyone of them individually that he would make a point of coming to their hotel; and Mr. Ledbury received all their cards with extreme affability, thanking them severally for their attention, and regarding them with mild benignity.

Having pushed forward with the crowd through the gates of the custom-house, they were severally searched—an ordeal which awakened much honest indignation in the breast of Jack Johnson, who finally relieved his wrath by pointing to his Wellingtons, and recommending the custom-house officers to detain them, hinting that as one had caused them so much uneasiness at Waterloo, probably *two* would be doubly annoying. A similar playful allusion to the Bluchers of Mr. Ledbury, who appeared rather nervous during the inquisition, was also indulged in; and then, as they emerged from the Douane, they found all the touters waiting for them. It was only by dint of sheer personal strength, and a few liberal and thorough British oaths, that Mr. Johnson preserved himself and his companion from being torn into divers pieces, and carried in divisions to the various hotels with which Boulogne abounds; there being, on an average, by the latest statistics, one house and a half to every single visitor who arrives there.

Acting upon the contradictory axiom that the dearest hotels are by far the cheaper, they determined upon putting up at the Hôtel du Nord; the commissioner whereof promised to clear their luggage in time for them to get everything that night; and then they strolled out into the town to inquire after the diligences, and look about them. There was plenty to attract Mr. Ledbury's attention at every step; and he was more especially amazed at hearing the dirty little children, who were luxuriating in the gutters, speaking French with such purity and fluency. Then he stared at the lamps slung across the streets, and the painted signs of the shops and the large red hands at the glove-makers; and he was finally lost in admiration when they turned up the Grande Rue and entered the Cathedral, at the numerous offerings, including the little ships hung from the ceiling, and the gaudy trappings of the different altars. Jack Johnson, having seen all these things before, was not so excited, but withal found new amusement in making faces at an old woman who was sprinkling holy water about with a Dutch broom; and when he was tired of this pastime, in blowing out a mass of candles, about the size of small rush-lights cut in half, which were flaring, guttering, and melting on a triangular stand near the door.

As they left the church they found a crowd in the open place in front of it, assembled round a man in a fine suit of clothes, who was standing on the seat of a gig, and evidently preparing to address the assembled multitude. His companion, a female in a flaunting bonnet and feathers, something in the style of the women who stand under large umbrellas and keep the *al fresco* gaming-tables on our race-courses, was playing a tune on the cornet-à-piston to attract an audience. When she had concluded, the gentleman commenced his speech as follows:—

“Messieurs et dames,—ne croyez pas que vous avez devant les yeux un charlatan, ni empirique, un jongleur, un prestidigitateur: non, messieurs—je méprise ces sciences, autant que je mépriserais moi-même si j'avais le malheur de les professer.”

“What does he say?” inquired Mr. Ledbury.

"He says he's a brick, and no mistake," replied Johnson.

"Thank you," returned Mr. Ledbury, with much gravity. "What a flowery language the French must be! I wish I spoke it."

The man continued—

"Mon titre est modest; je suis le premier physicien de l'univers, et aussi du Boulevard du Temple à Paris: et j'aurai l'honneur, messieurs et dames, de vous offrir des médecines les plus redoutables à deux sous le paquet; et les allumettes chimiques Allemandes à un sou la boîte. Voyez, messieurs, les allumettes Allemandes!"

"What are they?" again asked Mr. Ledbury.

"They are called, in the Tottenham Court Road dialect, 'Congreves, a halfpenny a box,'" said Johnson. "See! he's going to light one."

"A présent, du feu!" cried the doctor, using the same grandeur of tone in which the Astley's leader of a storming party would exclaim, "Storm the ramparts!" But the doctor's importance experienced a slight drop; for, after various rubs, the obstinate lucifers would not light. A laugh arose from the crowd, to which the "*premier physicien*" calmly replied—

"Allons, allons, messieurs: ce n'est rien. L'Allemagne abuse décidément de notre confiance."

"I wish I could understand him," observed Mr. Ledbury. "Do tell me what he says."

"He says the German opera was a failure, and Herr Dobler is the devil's godson," replied Johnson. "Now look!—he is handing his goods amongst the crowd. Buy something."

"What's this?" asked Mr. Ledbury, taking up a small tinsel roll, about the thickness of his little finger.

The physician returned an answer which to Mr. Ledbury was about as intelligible as double Dutch spoken backwards—a *patois* ever extremely difficult to understand.

"It's a *bouillon*," said Johnson. "Try it."

"It's remarkably nasty," replied Mr. Ledbury, putting a small piece in his mouth.

The people around began to laugh at this proceeding; and when Mr. Ledbury, blushing very deeply, and imagining that they were amused with his wry face at what was possibly an acquired taste, bit off a large piece and swallowed it boldly, their merriment increased to a roar.

"What is it?" he exclaimed again.

The doctor, comprehending from his gestures what he wished to know, replied, "Monsieur, c'est une grande cosmétique pour lisser les cheveux."

"What a funny mistake!" said Johnson. "You have been eating a stick of coloured pomatum."

Whereat Mr. Ledbury coloured up more deeply than ever, and tried to laugh through his blushes, like a sunbeam on Lord Mayor's day struggling through the red fog: but he was evidently much bewildered.

"Never mind," said Jack Johnson: "keep the rest for your own

use. You have not got too much hair, and what you have is harsh enough to work into a birdcage. It will do it good."

And after this pleasant adventure they returned to their hotel. Here the commissioner told them that he had taken places for them the next morning in the diligence, and they accordingly retired to bed, Mr. Ledbury's head being filled with confused visions of smiling *grisettes* in cocked hats and postillions' boots; and Jack Johnson wondering if a charming little *bouquetière*, whom he neglected to call upon before he last left Paris, would chance to meet him and upbraid him with his want of etiquette.



CHAPTER III.

THE JOURNEY FROM BOULOGNE TO PARIS.

THE bright sun was shining as impudently as he well might into the double-bedded room occupied by our travellers at Boulogne, when Mr. Ledbury arose the next morning from his slumbers. It is true his dreams of anticipated pleasure had been somewhat prematurely disturbed by Jack Johnson's singular love of harmony. This vivacious gentleman, always wide awake, and on the present occasion extra vigilant, had been indulging since five o'clock in an extemporaneous vocal and instrumental concert, as he lay in bed; vocal, as regarded his execution of several new and popular comic songs, which would have frightened John Parry into fits, but were withal very diverting; and instrumental, from the introduction of a solo on his pocket-comb enveloped in a piece of newspaper, on which he was imitating the cornet-à-piston, and performing an intricate air, which he termed "Hallelujah upside-down."

They were not long in completing their toilet; and having locked their carpet-bags, and bolted their breakfast, they walked down to the office of the diligence in the Rue de l'Écu, a quarter of an hour before the time of starting. There was a bustling throng of people, speaking every language ever known, round the *bureaux* of the rival conveyances; and Mr. Ledbury was all astonishment. Indeed, the lumbering form of the vehicles, the motley crowd of passengers, the costume of the postillions and *conducteurs*, and the running accompaniment of extraordinary oaths, and apparently violent altercations, without which the French can never do anything, and which are peculiarly in force during the lading of a diligence—all these things together formed a scene so thoroughly novel and continental that minds less reflective than Mr. Ledbury's would have been interested in observing them.

Their places had been taken in the *banquette*, that being the most agreeable as well as the cheapest part of the diligence; and Jack Johnson had rushed into a shop as they came along and purchased a bottle of *cognac*, and also one of *vin ordinaire*, for their special solace on the road. When their names were called over, he climbed up to his perch by a series of violent gymnastic exertions; and then, taking the bottles from Mr. Ledbury, and stowing them away under the seat, he assisted his friend in the ascent to the summit, which was not accomplished until he had several times lost his footing, and, still clinging to the strap, had swung about in the air like a samphire gatherer.

At last the reading of the list of travellers was concluded, and the passengers were secured in the diligence; the luggage tarpaulin had been strained as tight as a drum; the postillion contrived to collect about fifty reins, more or less, in one hand from all the six horses; the *conducteur* first threw up his *portefeuille*, and then himself, and the huge machine moved on. Then Jack Jackson put himself into pantomimic attitudes, expressive of deep affection towards all the females he perceived at the windows; and even Mr. Ledbury, becoming rather joyous and excited, nodded familiarly to strange people in the street, and then frightened at his temerity, drew back into a corner of the *banquette*, blushing deeply. After that, Jack Johnson asked the *conducteur* if he would favour him with the loan of his horn to play Malbrook with the chill off; and, on receiving it, performed a wild *concerto* thereon, which was very effective—especially the note of savage defiance that he blew at a *gendarme* who was standing at the corner of the Grande Rue, and whose moustachois nearly curled up into the corner of his eyes with indignation at the affront.

These diversions lasted until they got out of the town, and where fairly upon the road, when the *conducteur* lighted his pipe and the postillion began to hum a song, which appeared to have neither tune, sense, beginning, nor end, but with which, nevertheless, he seemed greatly delighted, especially a part which he repeated an indefinite number of times, and which ran thus, as well as Johnson could catch it:—

“ Dhlion ! dhlion ! dhlion ! dhlion
 Le postillon de Ma'am Ablou,
 C'est un rusé loup-garon,
 Hi ! hi ! hi ! cr-r-ré nom de Dieu ! ”

At every village they passed, where there were any French words written on the houses or shops, Mr. Ledbury pulled out a pocket dictionary to learn the translation of the words; and when they stopped to change horses, Jack invariably imbibed some of the wine to the health of the natives who were loitering about the diligence, and then treated them with a song—now expressive of some particular pilot, who, upon a fearful night, persisted in ordering a refractory passenger to go down below, instead of pacing the deck—and anon describing his feelings of affection towards a certain ancient and courageous oak standing in his pride without a companion; after

which outpourings of merriment he generally appeared considerably relieved. Mr. Ledbury was much delighted at this exhibition of his friend's talents; and equally seized with admiration at the ingenuity of the postilion, who, upon approaching Montrenil, contrived to guide the diligence through an archway half its size and height.

Between two and three o'clock they rumbled through the streets of Abbeville, and finally stopped at the principal hotel, where the greater part of the travellers descended to dine; and Mr. Ledbury prepared to follow their example, getting down from the *banquette* with much caution, like a bear from the top of his pole at the Zoological Gardens, after he has been indulged with a bun by an intrepid little boy. Jack Johnson adopted a more rapid mode of egress, and descended over the *conducteur's* seat somewhat after the fashion of the clown in the pantomime, from the first floor window of a lodging-house into which he had intruded.

"I suppose we shall dine here?" Mr. Ledbury ventured to observe, as soon as he found himself firmly on his legs.

"I suppose we shall do no such thing," replied Jack. "No, no—too dear! three francs a head for four courses of nothing, and no dessert! Do you know how they make soup at a travelling *table-d'hôte*?"

Mr. Ledbury confessed his ignorance.

"Well then," continued Johnson, "they boil all the bones of the day before in equal parts of hot water and lamp oil, and serve it up with the bread that the horses couldn't eat. That's what makes the French pigs so like greyhounds!"

"What!—the soup?"

"No—the want of it. That which we give our pigs in England they make soup of here. *Potage*, you know, is the French for hog-wash."

"Law!" exclaimed Mr. Ledbury; and he was about to look out the word in his dictionary, when Johnson diverted his attention by saying—

"Come along with me; I'll show you a dodge to get something to eat."

Pushing through the crowd of beggars that encircled the diligence, Jack entered a neighbouring shop, where he purchased a raised pie; then, dragging Ledbury after him, who became exceedingly nervous if he left his side for an instant, entered a small *café* on the other side of the way, where several French passengers, chiefly inmates of the *rotoude*, were solacing themselves with bread, fruit, *bière de Mars*, *eau sucrée*, and other exciting and substantial refreshments. Seating themselves at an unoccupied table, Johnson ordered a bottle of *vin ordinaire*, at sixteen sous, "for the good of the house," as he termed it; in consideration of which "the house" furnished them in return with knives and forks, or rather French complications of stained wood and cast-iron, intended for those implements.

"Now, you see we are dining for one-quarter of what we should have paid at the hotel," said Johnson.

"The pie is certainly very good," observed Mr. Ledbury, looking with a searching glance through his spectacles into the interior of it; "but I cannot exactly ascertain what it is made of."

"That's the great advantage of French cookery," replied Johnson, "you never know what anything is you eat. When we get to Paris, I'll take you to dine at a house celebrated for their mode of dressing eats."

"You don't mean to say they eat cats?" exclaimed Mr. Ledbury, opening his mouth with terror and surprise, until it formed a round O.

"If you always look so when you are astonished," said Jack, "you would be worth your weight in gentles to a fisherman, if it was only to be kept in a perpetual fright, and then sent running about with your mouth open to catch bluebottles."

"But do they really eat such dreadful food?" inquired Ledbury, in a confidential manner.

"Why not?" replied Jack Johnson, with a look of imperturbable innocence. "You will have learned to eat anything by the time you get back again. I never knew how nice cats were until I came to Paris. You will be surprised to see how well they jug."

"I must leave everything to you," murmured Mr. Ledbury, with an air of resignation. "I am quite at your mercy; and if I must be made sick or poisoned, your will is my law."

Whatever the pie was made of, it had the effect, in conjunction with the sixteen-sous wine, of lulling our friends into a perfect complacency of feeling towards themselves and everybody else, when they retook their places in the *banquette*, including the *conducteur*, who had also dined at Abbeville, and was disposed to be equally friendly. He spoke English very well, and told them about all sorts of strange occurrences that had taken place on the road whilst he had been connected with the diligence; some of which he had related so often that he actually believed them to be true. However, they had the effect of beguiling time; and, as Jack Johnson never allowed himself to be out-done, he also told some extraordinary stories; so that the journey passed very pleasantly on all sides.

As evening approached, and darkness gradually stole over the bare and expansive tract of country on each side of them, the conversation became less animated; and, under the combined influence of travelling, weariness, eating, and drinking, our two friends bethought themselves of trying to catch a little slumber. The *conducteur* routed out two or three sheepskins from under the seat of the *banquette*, which proved very acceptable, as the evening air was rather chilly. Mr. Ledbury shrank into a corner of the vehicle, and taking off his spectacles, shut his eyes by main force, and fell into the monomania, usually attendant upon night travelling, of endeavouring to make himself think that he was going to sleep. Johnson, on the contrary, crept over the back of the seat under the luggage tarpauling; and, by changing the position of sundry boxes and portmanteaus, cleared a space sufficient for him to recline in nearly at full length, wedging himself in with stray carpet bags, and using a sheepskin as a coverlid. When he had arranged himself to his satisfaction, and lighted his pipe, he called out

"Halloo, Leddy, how are you getting on?"

"I am very comfortable, thank you," replied his companion, sorry to find that he himself was not asleep. "How are you?"

"Oh! all right—look here."

"You seem very strangely situated," cried Mr. Ledbury, peering into the space behind, wherein all he could see were Jack Johnson's boots up in the air, and a glowworm-looking light where his head was, half concealed by a hamper. "I should think that was a very uneasy position," he observed.

"Not at all—beautiful!" replied Jack. "I've never been used to a bed. We had a small house and a large family at home, and I never got promoted higher than the back-parlour sofa. Good night, old fellow!"

The *conducteur* here commenced another anecdote; but finding, after a short time, that he received no answer to his queries, and heard no expressions of admiration at the marvellous points in his narrative, he at length desisted, and drawing his fur cap over his eyes and ears, began himself to nod, until the necessity of paying the postillion at the next *relai* aroused him from his fitful dreams.

It was now night. The sky was clear, and myriads of stars were twinkling with frosty brightness in its deep blue vaults, barely illuminating the long sweeping outlines of hill and plain that stretched out on either side of the road, where the formal rows of tall spare trees permitted an occasional glimpse of the country beyond. Here and there a solitary farmhouse betrayed its locality by the glimmering light from its windows; but with this exception, there were few tokens of habitations between the villages on the route, the highway everywhere preserving its straight, unbroken regularity; and in the villages themselves there was little appearance of life. A single lantern was generally displayed at the *messageries*; and two or three yawning figures, clumping about in their wooden shoes, helped the postillion and *conducteur* to change the horses; then all again became quiet, nothing breaking the silence of night but the rumbling of the diligence over the rough pavement, the conversation which the driver was continually carrying on with the horses, and the monotonous jangling of the bells on their head-pieces and bearing-reins. As the vehicle, about the middle of the night, entered the market-square of Beauvais, every part of the large city was as noiseless as the grave. The very lamps hung across the streets appeared to be thinking about going to sleep; and the weary passengers, most of whom had enveloped their heads in travelling caps of a shape and fashion which one only observes in a night-diligence, turned out to see what time it was by their watches, with the assistance of the gleaming lantern in front of the *coupé*; and, finding it much earlier than they expected, snored a few expressions of discontent to themselves, and with their eyes half shut blundered back to their places, to the great annoyance of the people who sat next the door.

Everything must, however, come to an end, whether it be a long night, a dull comedy, or a pianiste's solo at a morning concert; and about five in the morning our travellers stopped to breakfast at a roadside inn, which a glaring blue board with gold letters raised to the dignity of "POSTE AUX CHEVAUX." Everybody looked extremely owlsh as they turned out for coffee; and a hasty toilet, without soap,

in a pie-dish, did not much improve them. Jack Johnson preferred a good dashing ablution in the horse-trough, which he cleared out and pumped full again for the occasion; but it was not without great perseverance that he prevailed upon Mr. Ledbury to do the same, for it was terribly chilly; yet they felt much refreshed after it, and looked quite ruddy and blooming. It was hardly light now, so they did not care particularly about the graces, but sat down to the coffee and dry toast with as great a relish as if they had been under the hands of the *coiffeur* for half an hour.

In twenty minutes they were again *en route*; and now Jack quitted his roosting-place amongst the baggage, and resumed his old position in the *banquette*. As they neared St. Denis, the villages approximated closer to each other, and when they arrived at that city the inhabitants were beginning to stir themselves; for the French, generally speaking, are an early people, both in getting up and going to bed.

"Have you quite made up your mind where we are to go when we get to Paris?" inquired Mr. Ledbury.

"Not quite," replied Johnson. "The Hotel Corneille, in the Place de l'Odéon, would be our mark; but I think they would recollect me. I have not been there since my friend Davis committed suicide."

"Did what?" exclaimed Mr. Ledbury, starting with a nervous jump to the other end of the seat.

"Asphyxiated himself, you know, with charcoal," replied Jack. "Davis was studying, as he called it, at the Hôtel Dieu, and the carnival had run away with all his money. He was a young gentleman whom his father had 'found out': an exceedingly jolly chick, but too jolly by half for his governor, who kept him very short of tin; and at the end of the month he found himself in a state of insolvency."

"How very dreadful!" exclaimed Mr. Ledbury, pathetically; "and in a foreign country, without friends or resources!"

"Ah!—wasn't it bad? Well, he could not pay his rent at the hotel, so he agreed to flit; gradually moving all his things away, and shooting the moon to a friend's lodging in the Rue de la Harpe."

Mr. Ledbury, having but a very confused notion of the lunar sporting in question, merely ventured to ask, "How did he contrive to do so?"

"Oh! very well," replied Johnson. "He wore six shirts and three pairs of trowsers at once. Socks did not trouble him much, for the washerwoman had beaten them all away at the tops and bottoms until they were merely bands round the ankles. He put his shaving-tackle and small effects in his Wellington boots, and carried them out in his hands under pretence of getting them mended. When he had cleared everything, he committed suicide. You don't know what a *four du charbon* is?"

Mr. Ledbury confessed his inability to form an idea.

"It is a small French fireplace, like an anatomical preparation of a flower-pot with a false bottom. Davis filled his with burning charcoal, and when the vapour had spread about enough to choke anybody

he rang the bell, shut the window, and threw himself upon the bed in the attitude of an untrussed fowl."

"But he had really no intention of killing himself?" asked Mr. Ledbury.

"Will you oblige me by repeating that question?" replied Johnson. "Did he mean to kill himself? Oh! yes, certainly; I should rather think he did!" and he raised his hand to the level of his nose, and appeared playing an imaginary *cornet-à-piston* with his fingers. "When the *garçon* came into the room," he continued, "he bawled out for the master of the house, who threw a basin of water over Davis, and rapidly brought him round. He told a sad tale about having been robbed of his little all, and created such a sensation that I think they would have lent him fifty francs had he wished it. The excitement soon passed away, for the French are always up to their games in that line, and that afternoon Davis walked out of the hotel, and took the diligence to Boulogne."

"But was not all this very dishonest?" asked Mr. Ledbury.

"Very, indeed," replied Jack Johnson, sighing; "I can assure you the recollection of it cost Davis many bitter moments—very many."

And Jack looked very much indeed as if he thought it had done so.

About half-past seven the diligence stopped at the barrier, and one of the patrols of the *octroi* in dark-green clothes, with a sword in his girdle, mounted into the *banquette*, and took his place by their side, much to Mr. Ledbury's terror, having been informed by Jack Johnson that some one of the passengers would certainly be taken prisoner at the end of the journey. The diligence then crossed the Boulevards, not particularly lively at this time of the morning, and rumbling down the Rue de Grenelle, finally entered the archway of Laffitt's *Messageries Générales*, in the Rue St. Honoré, where the passengers descended, and the *douanier* commenced the almost nominal process of looking at their luggage.

"What does this man want my keys for?" inquired Ledbury, as the officer spoke to him in a dialect half English, half French.

"Eh, what?" exclaimed Johnson, assuming an air of fright. "You don't mean to say he wants your keys?"

"Yes, I do," replied Ledbury, growing very nervous. "What's it for?"

"You are suspected of carrying secret despatches, then," replied Johnson. "You hav'n't—no—you can't have taken advantage of coming with me to tamper with the Government! What papers have you?"

"Nothing," answered Ledbury, "but some Penny Magazines."

"That's it, then!" said Jack. "Good heavens! how could you be so imprudent as to bring a Penny Magazine into France? They saw them at the Boulogne custom-house, and have telegraphed the intelligence to Paris. We shall be sent to the Bastille!"

"Oh!" groaned Mr. Ledbury, in acute horror, as the man re-closed his carpet-bag and gave him the keys, telling Johnson in French that he could go when he pleased.

“What does he say?” demanded Mr. Ledbury, anxiously.

“That we are in extreme peril,” replied Johnson. “He adds that we must go to the Hotel de l’Etoile du Nord, and there await the prefect of police. How could you think of bringing a Penny Magazine into France, when you knew it contained a picture of herring-curing at Yarmouth?”

“I did not mean anything—upon my honour I did not!” cried Ledbury, energetically. “I never knew what herrings had to do with the French Government.”

“It is now too late,” said Johnson, mysteriously; “our doom is sealed, and here comes one of the Government cabs to convey us.”

A *citadine* rattled into the yard, and Jack thrust Mr. Ledbury in just as he was about to appeal to the passengers of the diligence. Then, getting in after him, they drove off to the Quai St. Michel, where the hotel was situated which Johnson meant to patronise: nor did he undeceive his companion with respect to the treasonable conveyance of the Penny Magazine until he had amused himself immensely with his extreme fright.

Having chosen a pleasant room on the fourth floor, with a cheerful view of the Morgue on the other side of the river, and the towers of Notre Dame to the right, our travellers refreshed themselves with a comfortable breakfast and a warm bath, and then made their toilette. Mr. Ledbury carefully unpacked his clothes, and having burnt his Penny Magazines—the mere sight of which gave him a nervous twitching—he arrayed himself in such garments as he thought would be calculated to impress the Parisians with an idea of his style, including a waistcoat which had been amazingly admired at an evening party at Highbury, and a pair of very severe short Wellington boots. When this process was completed, they sallied forth, Jack Johnson acting as guide—a situation which he filled very well, from his perfect knowledge of the localities of Paris.

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CHAPTER IV.

MR. LEDBURY'S FIRST DILEMMA.

A PLAN is laid down in some of the itineraries for seeing Paris in a week; but Mr. Ledbury, under the auspices of his friend, very nearly made the tour in a day. Jack Johnson was one of the true “push-along-keep moving” school; he first rushed through the Palais Royal, and then up the Rue Vivienne to the Boulevards; next he took an omnibus to Pere la Chaise, and having whirled Ledbury through the cemetery, and showed him the tomb of Abelard and Heloise, he dragged him to the Place de la Bastille, and then drove in a cab to the Louvre;

from this he galloped rather than walked through the Tuileries and up the Champs Elysées; and, having pulled Mr. Ledbury to the top of the Arc de l'Etoile, and allowed him five minutes to see the view, he bolted down again, crossed the river to the Invalides, and finally stopped to rest in the gardens of the Luxembourg, where Mr. Ledbury, to use Jack's phrase, appeared "completely circumslodgollagized" with what he had seen.

"Now, I'll tell you what we'll do," said Johnson, as soon as he found breath to speak. "We will dine outside the Barrière du Mont Parnasse, and finish the evening at one of the *quinquettes*."

"But is it not Sunday?" observed Mr. Ledbury, a vague idea to that effect just striking him.

It certainly was, although there were few evidences of the fact. All the shops and *cafés* were wide open; the click of billiard balls and rattling of dominoes issued from the latter; music sounded in most of the streets, which were thronged with well-dressed people; and the bills of the various theatres against the walls all offered superior attractions. The students had donned their best grey trousers, and the *grisettes* their prettiest caps. In fact, all looked as gay and cheerful as well might be.

Having rested themselves for a short time, they passed through the gardens, and crossing the Boulevard du Mont Parnasse, arrived at the barrier. Here an amusing scene presented itself. The entire length of the street was thronged with holiday-keepers; the windows were all open, and from each of them quadrille bands were pouring forth their harmonies; swings and roundabouts were revolving on either side of the way with singular pertinacity; images of plaster were stuck up to be shot at from cross-bows at four shots for a sou; perambulating kitchens for the sale of *goffres*, *galettes*—the never-satiating *galette* of the *grisettes* and their admirers—and fried potatoes sent abroad enticing odours to the hungry; delicious melons at ten sous each were lying about upon the ground for sale; whilst conjurors, fortune-tellers, and soldiers, pure idle "*tourlourous*," completed the motley throng.

Elbowing their way through the crowd, they arrived at a large building, on whose front was inscribed:—

"TONNELIER

AU SALON DES 200 COUVERTS."

They entered the hall, and ascending the stairs, took possession of one of those small rooms entirely appropriated in Paris to eating, drinking, and philandering. Here Jack Johnson ordered dinner, and whilst it was getting ready they amused themselves by looking out of the window into the gardens, where a quadrille band was playing, and a large assemblage of young people dancing. Suddenly Johnson darted from his companion, nearly dragging off the table-cloth and everything upon it in his anxiety to get out; and then, flying downstairs into the gardens, Mr. Ledbury beheld him, to his astonishment, offering a series of intense bows and salutes to a little black cap, with crimson ribbons, that enclosed a very pretty face.

"Bless me!" thought Ledbury, "he is going to bring a young French lady up here."

Hereat he pulled up his collar, wiped his spectacles, and brushed his fingers through his short hair to improve his appearance, wondering all the time who it could possibly be.

His conjectures were cut short by Johnson's return with the young lady on his arm, whom he formally introduced as Mademoiselle Aimée. Upon which Mr. Ledbury made a polite bow, and got as far as "*J'ai le plaisir*," where he stuck fast, and then, not knowing what to do, blew his nose, and knocked a crumb off the table-cloth.

The new-comer was a fine specimen of the Parisian *grisette*—small, but perfect in figure, with chestnut hair lying in smooth bands upon her fresh cheeks, and dark eyes that almost spoke, so eloquent was their expression. A very becoming, yet withal exceedingly common, shawl was thrown over her shoulders in a manner only to be accomplished by a Frenchwoman; and her small foot was set off by an equally inimitable *chaussure*, without the least speck of dirt upon it although the back boulevards are not the cleanest thoroughfares in the world. Her gown was made of some cheap fabric, yet with a style and perfection of fit that would have raised the envy of any English milliner, and her gloves were equally faultless. How this *tourneur* is kept up upon thirty sous a day—the usual wages of the *grisette*—we do not correctly understand; it was not until we discovered so many shops for the sale of little jean *brodequins* and black silk mittens in the neighbourhood of the Ecole de Médecine and Sorbonne that we could at all draw an inference with respect to this singular fact of foreign domestic economy.

"Do you know the young lady?" asked Ledbury, when the confusion of introduction had subsided.

"Rather!" replied Johnson, taking her hand in a most familiar manner, and putting it upon his own, which proceeding caused her to smile. "She is a very old friend. I used frequently to dance with her last year."

"She is very good-looking," observed Mr. Ledbury, "and has excellent teeth."

"I believe you," returned Jack; "regular mineral ones, as good as the sets on black velvet outside dentists' doors."

"Que dit-il?" asked Aimée, appealing to Johnson.

"Que tu es bien belle, ma mie," was the reply.

Dinner now appeared, and the trio took their seats at the table. The young lady did the honours with becoming grace. Jack Johnson acted as interpreter, and tossed for a bottle of champagne with Ledbury, who of course lost, but nevertheless drank his share, and after the third glass grew quiet hilarious, and entered into a long oration upon the charms of female society.

"I wish I spoke French, Jack," observed our friend.

"You'll soon learn it," said Johnson; "never be afraid to try."

"*I spik Angleesh!*" exclaimed Aimée, divining the subject of the conversation, with the usual perception of a foreigner wishing to be agreeable. "*I spik Angleesh—rosbif—God-dam—portare-beer.*"

“Bravo!” cried Ledbury, quite enchanted. “How’s your mother?”

“Yes,” returned the girl, with a pretty smile.

The dinner passed off in the most pleasant manner; and then, as they had commenced lighting up the gardens, the party descended, and took their seats at one of the small tables which were placed round the space enclosed for dancing, Johnson ordering a bottle of wine at twelve sous—the ordinary outside-the-barrier price.

Our own Vauxhall, as it once existed—and we hope after so many false alarms it will continue to do so—is infinitely superior in the *coup-d’œil* of brilliancy and extent to any of the *quinquettes* of Paris; but it lacked the style of company that raises all the continental amusements so far above our own. Place the ordinary frequenters of Vauxhall with their unmeaning, noisy mirth in the gardens of the *Barrière du Mont Parnasse*, and they would sink below notice; but transfer the spirit and gaiety—the students and *grisettes*, the *cabinets particuliers*, and general arrangements of the *Chaumière* and places of its class to Vauxhall, and a *fête* would take place to which even the gorgeous festivities of the *Arabian nights* would yield in attraction. And yet, with all their license, a female might go alone to any of the French dancing-gardens without the slightest chance of insult.

The lights, the music, and the general excitement aided by the wine, had such an effect upon Mr. Ledbury that he began to talk French to the waiters, and poke Johnson in the ribs with an expression of sly humour; he being, to use his friend’s expressive phrase, “hit under the wing, so that he couldn’t fly.”

At length the band struck up one of Labitsky’s beautiful waltzes, and Johnson led Aimée into the circle. Emboldened to a singular degree, Mr. Ledbury thought he would attempt to waltz as well; and after being refused a dozen times in succession by as many different *belles*, at last prevailed on a lady to be his partner. It may be presumed that the performance which ensued was one of a novel and extraordinary kind. He rushed round and round the lady, like a cork in a whirlpool; and at last completely lost his equilibrium and fell down, dragging his partner with him. A roar of laughter arose from the spectators, and Johnson, not without some difficulty, succeeded in drawing him out of the ring, for truth to tell, he was becoming rather obstreperous.

This event, however, soon blew over; and they had enjoyed themselves for about an hour and a half, when a circumstance occurred which somewhat spoilt their amusements. A gentleman with a light *paletôt* and long dark hair—a clean original of the dirty copies that flit about the Haymarket—after dancing opposite to Johnson in one of the sets, came up to Aimée and asked her hand for the next, accompanying his request by a most winning bow and smile. Now it is perfectly allowable at a *quinquette* to address any young lady without an introduction, in a polite manner, provided she be sitting by herself; but if she is in company with a gentleman etiquette obliges you to ask his permission. In the present instance this courtesy was dispensed

with, and Johnson, seeing Aimée hesitating and undecided to what she ought to do, answered somewhat shortly—

“Monsieur, mademoiselle ne danse pas avec les étrangers.”

The student, for such he appeared to be, took no notice of the reply; but, with a glance at Johnson which savoured somewhat of contempt, again addressed Aimée, saying coolly—

“Veux-tu danser avec moi, mon ange?”

“I have told you, monsieur,” said Johnson, horribly nettled at this last speech, and his taking the liberty to *tutoyer* in the most intimate manner, “that this lady is engaged. At all events, she will not dance with you.”

The intruder muttered a broken sentence, in which the words “*cochon*,” “*Anglais*,” and “*sacré*,” were very perceptible. At last he came in such unpleasant proximity to Aimée that Johnson pushed him back with his elbow, exclaiming “*Va-t-en, canaille!*”

The student with the rapidity of lightning caught up a glass of *vin ordinaire* from the table, and dashed the contents in Johnson’s face, who returned the compliment by planting a well-aimed blow on his adversary’s chest. He reeled back against another small table, which he upset, falling himself amidst the bottles, glasses, and empty coffee-cups that were upon it.

“There will be the devil’s own row,” cried Johnson to Ledbury. “Keep close to me, and look out!”

The strife attracted the attention of the bystanders, and the table was immediately surrounded by students; while a confused clatter arose from everybody vociferating at once, to which Babel was a dead silence. Completely hemmed in by young Frenchmen, Johnson perceived that he and his friend would have little chance in a struggle. Mr. Ledbury suddenly became a prodigy of valour; he seized two empty bottles by their necks, one in each hand; and, jumping on to the table, whirled them about with his long arms like the sails of a windmill, without, however, committing any act of aggression.

The student who had first provoked the quarrel, and who had now recovered his feet, sprang upon Johnson like a tiger, and endeavoured to drag him down. But he had met with a little more than his match. Unless a Frenchman can kick your shins, or stick his finger into your eyes, he has little power to overcome you. Johnson knew that; and closing in quickly, he caught him round the waist, and again threw him heavily upon the ground. In a minute seven or eight of his friends crowded round Johnson with the intention of hustling him; nor was he able to get them off, until Mr. Ledbury jumped down from the table plump amongst them, with an impetus that knocked two down, whirling the bottles about like a wild Indian in a show performing a war-dance. There would now have been in all probability an awkward conflict, had not the municipal guards in attendance marched up to the spot, and broken through the ranks of the rioters. The instant Johnson caught sight of their helmets approaching, he informed Ledbury of the fact, and darted away. His companion, however, was too much lost in the excitement of the fray, and the wine he had imbibed, to understand him; and in another

instant he was somewhat surprised to find himself forcibly seized by two awful-looking soldiers, armed to the teeth.

Explanation was of no use, and if it had been, he could not give it. Half-bewildered, he fell a passive captive into their hands; for as somebody was to be taken into custody, of course the Englishman was the victim. Marching between their bayonets, he left the garden, and was conducted through the barriers into the city before he knew clearly what had taken place; and after a brief interview with the sergeant at the guard-house of the *arrondissement*, the unfortunate Mr. Ledbury found himself the inmate of a cell in a French police-office—a prisoner, and alone!

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CHAPTER V.

OF THE MANNER IN WHICH MR. LEDBURY WAS EXAMINED BY THE MUNICIPAL GUARD, AND OF HIS INTERVIEW WITH THE PREFECT OF POLICE.

THE cold grey light of morning crept sluggishly, as though it feared to enter, through the rusty bars in the apertures of the cell that served for windows; and the rumble of vehicles in the adjacent streets began a prelude to the round of noisy traffic, misery, happiness, and crime, which a day in a great city gives birth to, when the luckless Mr. Ledbury woke up, and allowed a clear perception of his not very enviable situation to burst upon him. His slumbers during the night had been confused and broken. Occasionally wild screeches and convivial yells had sounded from the contiguous cells; but when these rose to an unpleasant height, or tended in any way to disturb the nerves of the *garde municipale* (who dozed upon luxurious inclined planes of oak and iron in the outer room), a visit from one of them generally quelled the riot for a short period, only to return in most cases as soon as the functionary's departing footsteps were heard outside the door.

All the excitement of the champagne and *vin ordinaire* which sparkled from Mr. Ledbury's eyes the night before—all his vapid defiance and valorous demeanour—had passed away. A head-ache, which appeared likely to split his brain into two, had succeeded to his gay imaginings of the previous evening. His eyelids smarted with inflammation and the want of legitimate rest; and, moreover, he had broken one of the pebbles of his spectacles. His mouth was dry and parched; his hands red and swollen, and looking about the nails as if he had been exerting millions of new walnuts; whilst his mind revolting at everything he thought of or perceived about him. Two or

three companions of his imprisonment, of the lowest class of society, and of whose presence he had hitherto been entirely unconscious, were disposed about the cell. One was still snoring heavily with the stertor of intoxication; another was smacking his lips with thirst, or the lack of the usual morning stimulus from the *marchand de vin* to settle his irritable and depraved stomach; and a third, awake, but scarcely returned to his proper intellects, was gazing listlessly at the window, which quivered in his disturbed vision, or indulging in occasional unmeaning wailings, half melodious, half lachrymose. Mr. Ledbury's mild temperament was ill calculated to bear up against the first terrible consciousness of his position as he awoke. The whole reality by which he was surrounded faded away in the appalling visions of the galleys, the mines of Siberia, impalement, underground cells in the Bastille, laden with heavy chains, the guillotine, the bow-string, and other continental modes of punishment, which rapidly crowded upon his imagination. Suppose, by the mild intervention of the law, he should only be imprisoned for two or three years in a fortress! Gracious powers! how would his family at Islington bear the shock when they came to hear of it!—what desolation would brood on the hearth! What would all his young lady friends of bygone evening parties think of him when they were informed of his disgrace? and how would the Saturday-night organ, that always played “As I view those scenes so charming” out of tune, contrive to do without the hebdomadal penny which purchased its retreat to an inaudible distance? These were fearful things to reflect upon, and he cried as he thought about them, or rather gave a very good imitation of having a very bad cold in his head. He envied the very flies, that flew in and out the bars just as they pleased, without asking permission of anybody.

An hour or two passed miserably away until about nine o'clock, when the bolts were withdrawn, and he was summoned to the front office of the guard-house, and confronted with the chief officer of the force to be interrogated; his extreme state of conviviality on the preceding evening having quite precluded the possibility of getting anything like a correct answer from him.

“Monsieur,” gruffly demanded the guard, in a voice made ten times more terrible by its transmission through a pair of formidable mustachios, “dites moi votre nom, s'il vous plait?”

“Not guilty,” replied Ledbury, who had some faint idea that a species of judicial inquiry was going on.

The supposed cognomination was immediately written down, as near as they could catch it.

“Où est votre passport?”

“Je non pas,” answered Ledbury, slightly comprehending the question, and endeavouring to answer it in French.

A very suspicious look from the guard followed this declaration. The truth was, that our hero, having been so short a time in Paris, had not yet got his provisional passport exchanged for his travelling one; but this he could not explain. The officer, not understanding him, gave orders that his pockets should be investigated.

One of the *coqs* forthwith began to search Mr. Ledbury—a process

which was exceedingly interesting to the others. The first article they turned out upon the bench was his pocket-handkerchief, covered all over with a representation of the flags of different nations, and a large Union-jack in the middle. This was evidently considered a most important discovery, and immediately entered in the police-sheet as a code of private signals. The standard of Algiers strengthened this belief, and the whole of the *garde* pointed it out immediately with great exultation; for, ever since the French won the battle of Constantina, they have formed a singular idea that there never was another victory in the world, and have framed all their toys, *bonbons*, sports, and public shows accordingly, wherein "*les sacrés Bédouins*" are always represented as getting ten to one the worst of it. Then from the other pocket was produced a most suspicious list of the General Steam Navigation Company, evidently in correspondence with the pocket-handkerchief; together with his keys, his little French dictionary, some crumbs of biscuit, and some nuts which he had pocketed from the dinner-table, having heard such proceedings were customary in France, and proper to be done. His waistcoat gave up all of the *cosmétique* that he had not eaten at Boulogne; a half-crown pencil-case, which he had been lucky enough to win for eight shillings at a Ramsgate library last year; a few francs; an old pass-check of Covent Garden theatre, with the word "*COMUS*" on it—another proof of some secretly organised society—and two or three *jujubes* melted into one conglomerate.

As soon as the search was completed the guard got under arms, and Mr. Ledbury prepared to accompany them to the prefect of police, comparatively, much in the same state of mind as a condemned criminal who takes his last look at the coppers and stewpans of the Newgate kitchen on his dreary journey to pass through the hatch of the debtor's door, and ascend the fatal scaffold to

"danser une danse
Ou il n'y a pas de plancher."

There is generally a crowd of loiterers around the door of the *Corps de Garde*, to see what delinquents make their appearance in the morning; and when Mr. Ledbury emerged from the portals pertaining to the establishment of "*LIBERTE, ORDRE PUBLIC*," between two of the municipal guards with fixed bayonets, he would have given words to have become the inmate of one of his own short wellingtons; in other words, he wished, like the charity-boys immortalised in the "*Wreck Ashore*" by the late Mr. John Reeve of glorious memory, "to have shrunk into his very half-boots with fear." The little boys—and sad impudent fellows indeed are these Parisian *gamins*—pleased at his woe-begone, yet withal benevolent, aspect, ran by his side and huzzaed; the *grisettes* who were on their way to market or to work smiled at his general *tournaure* as some of them recollected his waltzing exploits of the previous evening; and a few idlers at the doors of the wine-shops addressed a few speeches to him in slang French—the *argot* of the Courtille—which, as they were not very consolatory, it is fortunate he did not understand.

They had not a very great way to go, and Mr. Ledbury soon found himself at the Prefecture, in the presence of the acting official, who somewhat re-assured him by being very like an ordinary man after all. Moreover, he spoke a little English, and could sufficiently understand Mr. Ledbury's defence of the suspicious pocket-handkerchief and other articles to perceive that there was no great sedition brewing through their means. The charge was entered into, and the master of the *quinquette* appeared to complain of his broken glass; but as none of the French students were present to speak of the assault, the case was finally dismissed, a few francs only being demanded in payment for the broken articles at Tonnelier's. This sudden deliverance quite overwhelmed Mr. Ledbury. He would have entered into a long speech, expressive of his gratitude at the leniency of the court; but another case came on, and the *sergent de ville* in attendance told him he might depart. Whereupon he left the office, and was not sorry to meet Jack Johnson at the door, who had not ventured inside, for fear that he might be recognised and declared as one of the offenders.

Mr. Ledbury's first feeling was to treat Jack Johnson with a cool disdain, as if he deeply felt the inhumanity of the latter gentleman in deserting him at his hour of trial. But his better nature prevailed, and he shook hands with his companion, just as if nothing had occurred. Having paid a visit to a neighbouring *coiffeur*, in order that a becoming toilet might be made, they jumped into an omnibus, and proceeded to breakfast at one of the two-franc *restaurateurs* in the Palais Royal.

"Well, Leddy," said Jack, as soon as they were seated in the *salon*, "you've begun well. It is not everybody has the good luck to see so much of the French life as you have done during your first twenty-four hours in Paris."

"I think I have seen quite enough for this once," replied Mr. Ledbury.

"Oh! fiddle-de-dee!—take some more wine. I knew a man who stopped a fortnight in Paris without recollecting a sight he had visited, although he kept a journal all the time—after a fashion."

"How was that?"

"Why, like many other of the brute classes of humanity—the animal 'gents' who visit Paris—he thought the chief attraction was buying Cognac at fourteenpence a bottle. He used to get regularly intoxicated at breakfast every morning, and then start out sight-seeing with his companions. At night they told him where he had been, and he put it down; but beyond this he had no idea. Do you like your breakfast?"

"I think my appetite is returning," answered Mr. Ledbury, who was making a tolerable attack upon some *rognons sautés* and had already finished his *demi-bouteille* of Chablis. "What are you eating there?"

"*Sole au gratin*," replied Jack Johnson; "scalloped sole, if I may term it so—only it isn't."

"Well, but it is a sole, is it not?" observed Mr. Ledbury.

"No more than you are a grasshopper," returned Jack. "How could they afford soles for a twenty-five sous breakfast, and so far away from the sea? The soles here are all flounders cut into shape, kept to acquire a game-flavour, and then served up with sauce and mushrooms."

"What a deception French cookery is!" remarked Mr. Ledbury.

"So is English too, occasionally," said Jack, "especially school-pies, and hashed mutton at home on Saturdays—all culinary equivocations."

"I suppose you will tell me next that these are not kidneys which I am eating."

"No more they are," replied Jack; "they cut them out of *foie de veau*. It's the same with everything else. Stewed fowl is made out of boiled veal; peach fritters, from Normandy apples. We have learnt that cats and rabbits are synonymous; and *bifteck aux pommes* is made from—no, I won't tell you. You shall go some day to Montfaucon, and judge for yourself.* I told Aimée this morning that I thought I should make you open your eyes before you went home."

"Oh! you have seen the young lady, then, already?" said Mr. Ledbury. "She must be about very early."

"She is—very," answered Jack, shooting a bit of crust from off the table with his finger, and hitting an old gentleman on the nose, who sat near them, with a red riband in his button-hole. Whereat the old gentleman looked remarkably fierce at a little child whom he imagined to be the culprit; and the little child, after wriggling about in various uncomfortable attitudes beneath his savage glance, finally began to cry, and was immediately knocked on the knuckles with a spoon by its mother for being fractious.

Having concluded their meal, Jack Johnson informed Mr. Ledbury that he had hunted up some lodgings for them that morning in the Rue St. Jacques, and that they would therefore leave the Hotel de l'Etoile that day. He added, as their stay in Paris would possibly be for some little time, this would be much cheaper than the hotel, at which he merely intended to rest the first night, that they might look about them for a suitable compartment. Mr. Ledbury could not help smiling, now the danger was all over, at the little advantage he had received from the bed he was about to pay for, which certainly had not been of much service to him—a circumstance of which Jack Johnson, on his part, did not complain.

* This speech is not altogether an imposition upon the credulity of Mr. Ledbury. Our readers may recollect that a year or two ago several hundred kilogrammes of horse-flesh were seized at one of the barriers by the *octroi* guard, and we know that this event was followed by the immediate failure of some cheap *restaurants* of the Quartier Latin.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE QUARTIER LATIN, AND MR. LEDBURY'S LODGINGS THEREIN.

SITUATED on the unfashionable side of the Seine, in the same relation to Paris as the Borough is to London, is a dense congeries of narrow, dirty, tortuous streets, that cling and twist round the Sorbonne and Panthéon like mudworms round a pebble at low water, and form in their *ensemble* the venerable Quartier Latin. It is a part of the city little known to the mere "weekly visitor" from England, and yet withal a most interesting locality. The flaunting Chaussée d'Antin and aristocratic Rue de Rivoli swarm with too many of our own countrymen; and the announcement of "Pickled Tongues" and "Cheshire Cheese" in the Faubourg St. Honoré inspires purchasers with a suspicion that the "English spoken here" places a treble price upon every article vended. The frigid respectability and dilapidated grandeur of the Faubourg St. Germain reminds us only of a French translation of Fitzroy Square; the Quartier St. Antoine is a mass of rags and revolution; and the Champs Elysées a conglomeration of conjurers, girls' schools, Punch's shows, *cafés*, and boarding-houses.

But the Quartier Latin has claims upon our attention and respect of another description, for there is no division of Paris more rich in historical associations. Independently of the interest attached to the Sorbonne and the gloomy crypts of St. Geneviève, nearly every street is connected with some romance of the *moyen-âge* of French history. In the monastery of the Cordeliers, which formerly stood on the site of the fountain near the spot where the Rue de l'Ecole de Médecine debouches into the Rue de l'Ancienne Comédie, we are told that in 1522 a lovely girl was discovered in the garb of a page, who had long waited upon the holy fathers in that capacity—they being, of course, perfectly unconscious of her sex; and that the authorities were ungallant enough to whip her from the convent, of which a portion of the walls are still visible in the Rue l'Observance. Here the club of the Cordeliers received the Marsillois auxiliaries previously to the slaughter in the Tuileries on the terrific 10th of August; and here also the following summer Marat lived, and was assassinated by the heroic Charlotte Corday. Within a radius of two hundred yards from this spot we arrive at the place St. Michel, where a statue was raised in the reign of the "mad king," Charles VI., to the memory of Perinet Leclerc, the son of the gate-keeper of the Porte St. Germaine, who stole the keys from beneath his father's pillow to admit the troops of the Duke of Burgundy, which led to the downfall of the partisans of Armagnac.

In the Rue St. Jacques—where Mr. Ledbury's new lodging was situated, the privacy of which we shall anon invade—on the dreadful eve of St. Bartholomew, Bethune, the young brother of Sully narrowly escaped assassination by showing a breviary to a soldier, which he had fortunately caught up in the confusion of the massacre.

In the adjacent Rue de la Harpe and Cloistres de St. Benoist, this book again saved him; and, after lying concealed for three days in the College de Bourgogne, which stood on the site of the present medical school, he was liberated and pardoned upon consenting to go to mass. The valiant Philip de Mornay at the same time escaped from his house in the Rue St. Jacques, whilst it was actually in possession of the mob, who were pillaging it, although the landlord was a Catholic. Nor should we omit to mention that at a later date, in the Carmelite convent which stood formerly in the Rue d'Enfer, the beautiful and penitent Louise de la Vallière retired in 1680; where also, after thirty years of pious seclusion and regret, she died.

But there is little now left to recall those bygone events; for the buildings have been razed, and streets of tall, dirty houses erected on the spots they occupied, if we except the time-hallowed walls of the Hotel de Cluny in the Rue des Mathurins, which alone enclose tangible memorials of the Quartier Latin in the olden time. And although the majority of sight-seekers at Paris know as little about the venerable edifice as a West-end exquisite does of Ratcliff Highway, yet it is well worthy of inspection: with its fine Gothic architecture, its fluted and embossed armour, its curiously-fashioned windows breaking the sunbeams into a hundred fantastic forms upon the polished oaken boards, for daring to intrude where all should be dim and mysterious; and its domestic relics of other days, which call up with mute and affecting eloquence indistinct imaginings of those who made a home of that old mansion, whose very names have now passed away even from the ancient chronicles.

But we will not farther rout up the mouldering archives of bloodshed and crime—our business lies not so much with them as with present records of gallantry and merriment; for the Quartier Latin derives its interest from other sources doubtless more congenial to the taste of our readers. One-half of the promoters of the real fun and gaiety of Paris reside within its limits. In a word, it is the abode—we think the *hive* would be a better term, were it not for the ideas of industry connected with that straw tenement—of nearly all the students of law and medicine in Paris; and very fortunate indeed is it that they have a *quartier* to themselves, or the walls of the city would not contain them, to say nothing of the iron gates at the barriers. They are all joyousness and hilarity; and their hearts are as light as the summer breeze that sweeps over the pleasant foliage of the Luxembourg gardens, endeared to their memory by so many flirtations on the stone benches. And the French students are not exclusive in their love-making, for they pay their court alike to all. The rosy Cauchoise in her high lace cap—the sprightly Lyonnaise—the “*belleville petite Belge*” (and what pretty creatures the Belgian girls are!)—with the laughing, pouting, constant, coquetting *grisette*—THE *grisette, pur sang*, of Paul de Kock, Jules Janin, Louis Huart, and Béranger—each in turn receives their protestations of an eternal love for the winter course of lectures, and equally each in turn jilts them. But they feel no very bitter pang when their professions are laughed at. Their love is as light as their hearts; and when they lose the affectionate glance

of one pair of soft eyes, they endeavour, without loss of time, to rekindle the flame, which is subdued and transient as the ignition of a hydro-pneumatic lamp, or a German-tinder *allumette*, in another.

The students are not, however, the only characteristics of the Quartier Latin. It is a great resort of *marchands d'habits*, or old clothesmen, as we unpolitely term them in England; and one would think they must be in the habit of transacting a considerable share of business with the inhabitants, as they possess an astonishing predilection for the streets about the Ecole de Médecine and Pantheon. Then there are perambulating sellers of almost everything at a certain price; and their barrows present a strange collection of articles, all of which may be purchased for five sous each—plates, knives, whips, decanters, whistles, pins, brushes, lucifers, brooches, looking-glasses, almanacs, pencils—in fact, an endless variety of wares. It is needless to add that all are of inferior manufacture, and more or less damaged: but they do for the young housekeepers of the Quartier Latin.

The suite of three rooms—or rather the apartment with two closets to sleep in, which the enterprise of Jack Johnson discovered for Mr. Ledbury and himself—was a very fair specimen of the lodgings of this part of the world. It was on the fifth floor, for the sake of air and economy, the price diminishing from forty to fifteen francs a month as you ascended the staircase: or, to speak properly, as they talk about the radiation of caloric at literary institutions, “in an inverse proportion to the square of the distance” from the street door. The furniture was simple and scanty, but there was enough. They had a fine looking-glass, however, with a marble slab before it, the use of the bellows, a vase of artificial flowers from the Boulevards, and an alabaster clock which did not go; there was also a secretary, which let down to form a species of table, and a stove in the corner—a curious compound of iron and crockery, with a tin chimney.

“Well, Leddy,” said Jack Johnson, as he pulled his panting companion up five flights of stairs and into the room, “what do you think of the crib?”

“Why, to tell you the truth, I——”

What Mr. Ledbury intended for a reply was never ascertained; for as he entered the apartment to inspect it, his feet slid away from beneath him along the glazed tile floor, which had been polished by the *frotteur* until he could see his face in it, and he measured his length upon the ground.

“Bravo!” cried Jack, quite enraptured at the event. “Here’s your artificial ice without a patent, and nothing to pay for trying it! Get up, old fellow!—that’s it. Are you hurt?”

“Oh! no—not at all,” cheerfully replied Mr. Ledbury, with the air of a person who had tumbled down in the street on a frosty day, but goes away smiling and looking pleasant, inwardly smarting with pain and confusion. “Oh! no—not at all. The room is rather high up, though; isn’t it?”

“That’s the beauty of it,” replied Jack. “Look at the view! If we were lower down we could not see one of those chimney pots,

nor the towers of St. Sulpice. Besides, the higher we get the more noise we can make. And then the furniture !”

“I don't think that clock goes,” said Mr. Ledbury, peering at the face of it.

“That's no matter—they never do; the look of it's the thing. Did you never win one of them at a travelling bazaar or fancy fair ?”

“I never had that good fortune.”

“That is because you did not try soon enough,” said Jack Johnson. “The clocks are always won the first night the establishment opens. People who come afterwards never get anything but back-gammon boards, boxes of soldiers, and mother-of-pearl salt-spoons. How deficient the diffusion of Useful Knowledge is still, in spite of all the Society's books !”

“This is a fact certainly worth knowing,” said Mr. Ledbury.

“To be sure,” replied Jack. “You may depend upon it, if Government were to start an educational course of ‘Dodges for the Million,’ it would be of infinite service.”

“You would make an excellent professor.”

“Rather !” said Johnson ; and, from what I can make out of the newspaper reports of Hullah's plan with his thumb and four fingers, I should do it in the same style—somehow so.”

And here candour compels us to state that Jack Johnson forgot himself, and was vulgar enough to indulge in a coarse habit peculiar to the lower classes when they wish to express the word “gammon !” pantomimically.

As soon as their effects arrived, and were stowed away in their proper places, Jack Johnson informed Mr. Ledbury that as they had come to live amongst the French medical students, they had better attire themselves accordingly, lest they should look too particular in the streets, which he thought they did at present. And, indeed, anyone else, with far less powers of observation, would have made the same remark, had they witnessed the crowd of odd beings who were loitering after lecture in the open space between the Café Dupuytren and the Ecole de Medecine, when our friends turned out to make some purchases. Some wore their hair flowing down their backs almost as long as a woman's ; others had it cropped quite close, and covered by a flat cap of bright scarlet, without a poke. These cultivated their mustachios until they grew like pent-houses over their lips ; those allowed their beards to reign on their chins in unshaven luxuriance. The majority wore trousers of a dingy grey, brought down very low over the insteps, and coats with half-inch collars, similar in style to the costume of the seedy foreigners who loiter about the “*Quartier du Lester-square*” at this time of the year. Some wore dark blouses ; others *paletôts*—a species of light shooting-jacket ; and a few had frock-coats. Nearly all carried pipes in their mouths, which they doggedly kept there ; removing them only to address a bright-eyed *grisette*, who was going by at the instant, and whom they accosted as Clara Fontaine. If you wish to know why this *belle* was called “Fontaine,” inquire in the Quartier Latin, and they will tell you.

Guided as usual by Jack Johnson, Mr. Ledbury repaired to a ready-made clothes establishment in the Palais Royal, attracted by an announcement at the door, of "25,000 PALETOTS!!" to choose from—a piece of information which caused much admiration in the passing reader, at the ingenuity which could pack such a legion of coats into so small an establishment—the whole concern being about the size of the little shops that are let into the wall of Hyde Park, at the commencement of Knightsbridge.

There was a great deal of haggling, when they at length discovered some apparel which fitted them. Jack Johnson generally commenced the traffic by offering the vendor just half what he asked; and then he rose his bidding as the other came down, until a price was obtained satisfactory to both parties. And very brilliant indeed did Mr. Ledbury look when he turned out in a fifty-franc coat, a twenty-franc pair of pantaloons, and a ten-franc waistcoat; and, when a new hat was added to the costume, he felt so thoroughly French that he almost expected the language to come intuitively with the habits of the country. He did not, it is true, see many of the French students in spectacles; but then, some of the national guard were them, and this was an excellent precedent.

"There's something in these clothes——" observed Mr. Ledbury, with great deliberation, as they entered the Rue St. Honoré.

"The deuce there is!" interrupted Jack Johnson. "What is it?—not the moth, I hope?"

"No - no," continued Ledbury: "I was going to say— or rather to observe—that there is something in these clothes which makes me think I could waltz, if I had a fair trial."

"You shall try with a chair when we get home," returned Jack; "and I will teach you."

And in five minutes Mr. Ledbury was lost in a day-dream of delirious anticipation of the sensation he should create by his elegant manners and dancing, when his friends at Islington gave an entertainment to celebrate his return from abroad. Indeed, he so far forgot himself as to commence doing his steps along the pavement of the Pont Neuf, until he made a graceful *balance*, and nearly upset some fried potatoes exposed for sale in one of the hollow buttresses.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE EVENING PARTY GIVEN BY MR. LEDBURY AND JACK JOHNSON TO CERTAIN STUDENTS AND GRISETTES, AT THEIR ROOMS IN THE RUE ST. JACQUES.

A FEW days passed very pleasantly, without much stirring excitement. Mr. Ledbury found himself more at home in Paris, and began to hammer out a few words of French, writing home to his friends whenever he found anybody going to London; whilst Jack Johnson employed his time in hunting up all the old students that he had known formerly who remained at the hospitals, having himself at one time entered the Ecole de Médecine when he had some idea of following the profession. Feeling the truth of the axiom that there was nourishment in whatever did not poison, they usually dined at Viot's, in the Rue de la Harpe, for eighteen sous; and in the evening patronized some of the promenade concerts, or went to Franconi's in the Champs Elysées, where Mr. Ledbury was more entertained than he would have been at the regular theatres, from his inability to follow the performers.

The latter resort was his most favourite place of amusement; and being very susceptible, he used to fall deeply in love every other night with one of the *écuyères*—now lost in admiration at the beautiful and daring Lejars—anon yielding to the fascinating attitudes and *haute équitation* of Caroline; and then forgetting both for the witching blandishments of Camille Leroux. Indeed, so powerful was the impression made by the last-mentioned Peri upon his inflammatory heart, that Jack Johnson discovered him one night standing upon a chair on one leg, and endeavouring, in a graceful attitude, to copy the fair *artiste's* impersonation of "The Flight of Zephyr." He had also purchased a map of Paris, and began to find his way about by himself; and, forgetting all about his imprisonment, had even visited the Chaumière, and descended the *Montagne Suisse* upon a wooden horse; without being at all afraid, and, expecting that he knocked his hat off, and ran over it as he shot down the inclined plane, with unusual success for a first essay.

Although Mr. Ledbury was not exactly one of the sort whom the French students usually associated with, still some of Jack Johnson's acquaintances, to whom he was introduced, were very friendly towards him. And, indeed, if he was not very "fast," he was amazingly good-tempered and liberal; and always looked so benignant and contented through the lenses of his steel spectacles, that at last they took quite a fancy to him. Several little *réunions* were given at their different lodgings; and although Mr. Ledbury's first pipe made him exceedingly pale and sick, yet after a few trials he succeeded pretty well, and even went so far as to buy a bowl made from white clay in the shape of a Turk's head, for his own especial use.

"I have been thinking," said Jack Johnson one day, as they sat

on a bench in the Luxembourg, enjoying the still balmy air, and watching the droll manœuvres of some recruits who were being drilled—"I have been thinking that we ought to have a flare-up in our rooms. We have been to a great many of the men's lodgings, and it is but fair that we should ask them back again."

"I am sure it will give me much pleasure," answered Mr. Ledbury; "but what shall we do with them?"

"I vote we have a dance," said Johnson.

"Law! what shall we do for ladies?"

"Oh! don't distress yourself upon that account," replied Jack. "I can find plenty who would give their ears to come."

"But excuse me," observed Ledbury. "Will it not be strange for girls to come alone to a bachelor's house?"

"Not at all—you don't understand," answered Johnson. "They are all good girls, although they are *grisettes*; and you shall see how properly young people in Paris can amuse themselves, even in the absence of all restraint, although the English might sneer at the *morale* of such society. Did you see any impropriety in Aimée the other evening?"

"None at all," replied Ledbury, afraid that he had offended Jack Johnson—"not the least. She was an exceedingly well-conducted young person, in whose company I should find much pleasure."

"I should think you would," returned Johnson, looking exceedingly sly and wicked. "Well, Leddy, when shall we have the hop?"

"Any time you like," answered his companion. "I leave everything to you, and thank you into the bargain for seeing to it."

The point once settled, Jack Johnson immediately set about carrying it into execution. Nothing could exceed his industry; and even Mr. Ledbury, accustomed as he was to his friend's displays of general utility, was surprised at the many new causes for admiration that turned up daily as he collected the guests, both male and female. The first were not very difficult to call together, for they all jumped at the invitation; but the others required much eloquence and persuasion before they were convinced that everything would be *très comme il faut*. And here Jack's wonderful omniscience came out uncommonly strong. First, he knew a *petit modiste*, named Suzon, in the Rue Racine, that he was convinced would come. Then, two young artists of his acquaintance, one of whom played the French horn, offered to bring Irma and Célestine, who sat for studies at the *atelier*. Next, he bolted down to his washerwoman's close to the Ecole Pratique, and persuaded two of the prettiest amongst the laughing, chattering *blanchisseuses de fin* there assembled, to honour Mr. Ledbury and himself with their company, promising them as much *gâlette* as they could eat, and no end of waltzing and *sirap de grosseille*. And these young denizens of the *lingerie* must not be placed upon a par with the awkward persons who bring home the baskets of clothes in England at the end of the week; on the contrary, they were attractive and *spirituelle*, speaking pure French, that would have passed current in the palmy days of Versailles; although, to be sure, an idiom or two peculiar to the Quartier Latin and its inhabitants did occasionally break out.

One or two of the young damsels, it is true, hung back a little; but then Jack bought a fine sheet of note-paper, with cockatoos and gold flowers all about it, and the name of the day on a pink tablet up in the corner, and penned an epistle as follows:—

“MM. Ledbury et Johnson présentent leurs complimens à Mademoiselle (Célestine or Eulalie, as the case might be), et la prient de leur faire l'honneur de venir en soirée chez eux,” &c. &c.

It is true that as the little *grissettes* had paid more attention to making up books than learning to read them, they could not very well make out the purport of the note; but they understood the cockatoos and gold flowers to mean something very polite, and the *billet* generally produced the desired acceptance of the invitation.

Aimée, Jack's old flame at Tommelier's, was, of course, to be mistress of the ceremonies; in consideration of which, that she might look becomingly elegant, he had given her such a pretty pair of network gloves, with flowers worked on the back in floss silk; as well as—ought we chronicle it?—as well as a kiss and a pair of glass earrings, which he had bought for twenty-five sous (the earrings, not the kiss) at a stall beneath the piazza of the Odéon theatre.

Not having a very extensive *salon*, the invitations were limited to a dozen, and the ensuing Monday pitched upon as the evening for the *fête*. As the time approached, Mr. Ledbury got very nervous for fear everything should not go off well; but was unwearied in his efforts, with Jack Johnson, to collect various articles for the comfort and nutriment of the guests. The proprietor of the house, who was a little, fat, irritable man, always looking very hot and greasy, as if he carried a broken flask of salad oil in his hat, and allowed it perpetually to run over his face, became very cross and surly at the increasing arrival of parcels that Jack sent home; and the wheezing old lady on the first floor, who kept the fat poodle, went into several mild fits of apoplexy from seeing her pet dog kicked up to the landing above, or launched down to the one below, in consequence of being always in the way when Ledbury or Jack came by with fresh purchases. There were one or two people in the house that our friends invited for the sake of their chairs and crockery. But they were requested not to talk about it, as all their fellow-lodgers could not be asked; the house being so tall, and containing so many inmates on its different floors, that you might almost have imagined it to have been one side of a London street turned upon its end.

The eventful evening at last came; and an hour before the appointed time of meeting, the *salon* looked exceedingly imposing. Two entire pounds of long wax candles were disposed about the room, placed in candlesticks as far as the stock would allow, and the remainder set in empty bottles, still, however, garnished with pink-and-white ornaments by Mr. Ledbury's love of refinement. Jack had hired for five francs, from an Italian boy, a piano-organ, which played an unceasing set of Masaniello quadrilles, and an endless waltz, as well as the Cracovienne. This was placed at the top of the drawers; and the performance thereon was to be entrusted in turns to the company. All the firewood and charcoal was routed out of the closet,

and put, for the sake of cleanliness and convenience, in Mr. Ledbury's carpet-bag and hat-box; and the shelves were now bending beneath bottles of Cognac and Mâcon, endless coils of bread and *galette*, and a few flasks of *limonade gazeuse*, *sirops*, and *fleur d'orange*, for the more delicate guests. The whole stock of fruit pertaining to the old woman who kept the stall at the entrance to the Luxembourg gardens was purchased by Jack, and displayed by Mr. Ledbury, with an artistic eye to effect, upon his bed. All the glass, and knives and forks, were shut up inside the stove; and when all the arrangements were completed, and the candles lighted, our hero thought he had never seen any stage banquet of *papier-mâché* pineapples and gilt wicker covers look half so imposing.

As the first clock began to strike the hour—a process which in Paris occupies twenty minutes amongst the different churches—a ring at the bell of the room announced the arrival of their first guests; for, when an hour of meeting is stated in the Quartier Latin invitations, it is understood to signify the time to a minute. Mr. Ledbury was too much agitated with expectancy to go to the door; so Jack Johnson opened it, and introduced Mademoiselle Aimée, "*fraîche comme une rose*," as Paul de Kock would have said had he seen her, all smiles and good-humour. She was immediately installed behind a large coffee-pot, with some spirits of wine, a box of lucifers, and a peck measure, more or less, of lump-sugar. Before long a French horn was heard in the distance, playing "*Au clair de la lune*," which, as it ascended the stairs, gradually merged into "*La dot d'Auvergne*," and then a terrible flourish of defiance was blown at the door to herald the entrance of the two young artists (who were called Jules and Henri), accompanied by the two young ladies whom they escorted, and who were politely handed to seats by Mr. Ledbury directly they came in—since, never wearing any bonnets, they had no occasion to take them off. Next came the two inmates of the house—sober clerks in the Bureau de Police—who looked very blooming, each in a pair of nineteen-sous *gants de Paris* from the doors of the Opera Comique. And before the first distribution of coffee was ready a merry musical laugh announced the arrival of the little *blanchissenses* from the neighbourhood of the Ecole Pratique.

Now, in England each individual would have been very silent and formal, making commonplace remarks, and equally unmeaning replies, or quietly wondering who and what the others were; but here it was quite different. Everybody was as much at their ease as though they had known one another for years; and they laughed and joked, and ate and drank, all so heartily, that it would have done your heart good to have seen them. You would have thought that there were some good qualities in human nature, after all—despite the persevering labours of those crabbed essayists who write upon sandpaper with a stick of caustic dipped in lemon-juice, and are so unceasing in their endeavours to make us think what a heartless, hypocritical set we all are. Mr. Ledbury, it is true, did not understand all their jokes, but nevertheless looked very happy, and laughed very joyously at them, which kept the fun going just as well. And when there was

a minute's pause, which, however, was of rare occurrence, he handed about the plate of *biscuit de Rheims* with most expressive pantomime; or showed the only conjuring trick he could perform, of making a rout-cake jump into his mouth from his left hand, by slapping it with the right; in the execution of which piece of dexterity he was allowed by all parties in Islington to be very clever. Everybody had arrived within-an-hour; and when the coffee was all gone they burnt brandy over lump-sugar in the saucers, and made what they were pleased to term *punch*. After which, all the dirty cups and plates were shot away into the drawers, and the tables turned outside the door, to make room for the dance.

The set was soon formed, and Mr. Ledbury perched himself upon the marble slab to play the organ, having volunteered to be the first musician. Jules put in a few occasional notes upon the French horn, which gave a very inspiriting effect to the orchestra, although they were in another key, and belonged to a different tune. There was no angry-looking Municipal Guard or *sergent-de-ville* to interfere with them; and if occasionally the dance did get a little reckless, and somewhat livelier than the style adopted in our high circles, yet they expressed no more merriment than they felt, and were at no pains to mask their natural hilarity, or dress Pleasure up in a suit of starch and buckram. When the quadrille concluded, they rested for some refreshment, and Aimée took Ledbury under her charge for the waltz, in which he succeeded tolerably well, having taken lessons of Jack Johnson for a few days previously. One of the clerks did not waltz; but having modestly stated that he thought he knew enough of music to turn the organ, he was forthwith perched upon the drawers, with a bottle of wine, and kept there for the rest of the evening.

"Well, this is doing it, Leddy—is it not?" said Johnson, as his friend concluded the waltz and tumbled up against him.

"Oh, capital!" was the reply. "But I say, Jack, do you think it's going off well?"

"I should rather think it was," returned Johnson. "There's only one man here I don't know. Aimée says he makes a little too free."

"Ah! which is he?"

"That sallow-looking fellow with the long moustachios. He came with one of Lisfranc's pupils; but Henri tells me he is always lurking about the schools, and is connected with some private gaming-house on the Boulevards."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Ledbury. "He asked me a little while back if I could play *écarté*."

"Well, don't do it—that's all."

"Law! Jack—I don't know a spade from a club," answered Ledbury, who had about the same idea of playing cards as he had of dancing a hornpipe on his head—perhaps not so much. "I am almost sorry now that I have accepted his invitation."

"Why—where has he asked you to go to?"

"To dine with him to-morrow in the Louis-le-Grand—I think he said—and bring you with me."

"And you have said we'll go?"

"Why, I could not very well help it," answered Mr. Ledbury, getting rather frightened. "He appeared a very gentlemanly fellow, and I had told him we were not engaged."

"Well, it can't be helped now," said Johnson, "and we must go. I shall not play at cards there, though, for all that."

Another quadrille finished as he was speaking, so their conversation was interrupted, and Mr. Ledbury was soon engaged looking after their refreshments. As they had been dancing a great deal, Jack thought it was time to introduce supper; and forthwith wheeled the table back into the room, and then they covered it with the viands. Mr. Ledbury was voted with general consent into the chair; and exceedingly convivial was his deportment therein, being much enlivened by a delicious compound of eggs, hot water, brandy, and lump-sugar, which Jack Johnson concocted and beat up in a soup-tureen. At last he got so lively that he volunteered a song; and, as the chair was too ignoble a situation for him to sing it from, Jules and one of the clerks hoisted him on to the top of the secretary; and there, between two candles, he indulged his audience with a patriotic ballad, which he gave with much spirit, about a certain exceedingly durable flag which had braved all sorts of rows and tempests for a thousand years, and wasn't worn out yet, but quite as good as new—in fact, better, for aught he could tell. He was particularly great in his runs and shakes, and drew down thunders of applause when he finished, although of course nobody knew what it was about, except Jack Johnson. When he had concluded, Aimée sang "*Les Lavenses du Couvent*:" and the harmony, once set going was kept up by all the guests, except the mild clerks, who, nevertheless, made capital listeners, and admired everything they heard. At last Jack Johnson struck up the following student's song, it the chorus of which they all joined most enthusiastically:—

"La vie a des attraits
Pour qui la rend joyeuse;
Faut-il dans les regrets
La passer soucieuse?
Jamais! Jamais!
Le plaisir est Français.

(Chorus, with great energy.)

Eh! ioup ioup ioup—trala la la la!
Eh! ioup ioup ioup—trala la la la!
La la la!
La la la!"

There were about thirty verses to this song, and they progressively increased in energy until the last chorus appeared to have aroused the popular indignation of the neighbours. A knocking was heard beneath the floor, which was at first imagined to be somebody beating time in the wrong place; but, as it continued after the song had finished, Jack formed the idea that somebody below wanted to go to sleep. He was not far out in his notion, for in a few seconds there was a ring at the bell, and the door being opened, allowed an entrance to the landlord, M. Mito, and a very imposing-looking *gendarme*

at his side, who, before anybody had time to ask what they wanted, said that it was eleven o'clock, and that the orders from the *maire* were for every *hôtel meublé* to be closed by that hour.

The order was at first received by Jack Johnson with a permission for the mayor of the *arrondissement* to go to a nameless locality which forms the last scene in the opera, and the first in the burlesque, of Don Giovanni. But, recollecting upon second thoughts that little is gained by opposing the French police, he filled up a bumper of brandy, and hoped the new-comers would honour him by joining their party, and drinking "to the health of Marshal Soult, and the battle of Austerlitz; coupled with the memory of the Emperor and the Charter of 1830."

This was a patriotic grouping of toasts that no Frenchman could withstand; so the *gendarme*, having glanced around him to see that he was not observed, entered the room with M. Mito. This fresh addition to their party after a short time increased the revelry, which grew fast and furious, until an hour of parting unparalleled in the social annals of the Quartier Latin. More invitations on all sides than ever were known were given and accepted, and the guests finally separated, as the newspapers say, highly delighted with their evening's entertainment.

At daybreak the next morning Mr. Ledbury found himself sitting on the drawers, and turning the organ the wrong way as he sang "She wore a wreath of roses" to the expiring candles. The *gendarme* and Jack Johnson were seated on the floor, playing a random game of dominoes. M. Mito was discovered in the fireplace, crying, as he thought of his grandfather, who was one of the Old Guard, and died some twenty years before he (M. Mito) was born; and the *garçon* of the house found all the keyholes of the different rooms filled with cherry-stones from the *cerises à l'eau de vie*, and the bell-pulls cut away from the doors, whilst all the lamps on the landings were trimmed with *vin ordinaire*.

And in the midst of the confusion which the room presented, in a comfortable *fauteuil* that had been borrowed from the porter's lodge, a cloth in her hands, and some clean cups by her side, as if she had fallen asleep from pure weariness in endeavouring to set things straight for breakfast, slumbered poor Aimée—as pretty and neat as ever—dreaming, no doubt, that she was in some fairyland, where all the trees were laden with peaches and *galette*, and all the fountains played *eau sucrée* and lemonade.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE BOIS DE BOULOGNE, AND MR. LEDBURY'S EQUESTRIAN FEATS THEREIN.

THERE is one very gratifying result attendant upon the exhilaration produced by a rather more-than-usual indulgence in the various convivial beverages which pure French Cognac lends its aid to concoct. Its elevating effects go off with little systematic derangement; and it leaves none of those extra-uncomfortable reflections upon past folly, which the Acherontic rack-punch, the heavy bottled stout, or the coarse fiery tavern brandy of England invariably induce.

Accordingly, although at the end of the last chapter we left Mr. Ledbury and Jack Johnson in the happy state which would have precluded them, for the moment, from casting up an intricate account, or undertaking any piece of work which required much cool reflection to perform, yet by eleven o'clock in the morning they were, to use Jack's expressive phrase, signifying the peculiar amount of coin which he generally selected to express an orderly state of domestic economy, "as right as ninepence." Aimée had been aroused from her slumbers, as now, like Kathleen Mavourneen, between sleeping and waking (for the head of the little *grisette* was not quite so strong as those of her companions, and she was slightly drowsy), was making coffee for our two friends. However, everything was very comfortable, and the events of the previous night—the "after party," which is always so amusing to discuss with people of slightly quizzical powers—furnished them with much diverting conversation. The *gendarme* had cleared himself off, to make what excuse he best might for his absence from the police-office; and M. Mito had been carefully carried downstairs, and laid upon a pallet-bed, until returning consciousness should allow him to receive his wife's gentle upbraidings with proper feeling and effect.

Mr. Ledbury never correctly understood who Madame Mito was, for he seldom caught a perfect glimpse of her; but sometimes, when he returned at night, he remembered to have seen a strange, wild-looking female, with a red handkerchief tied round her head, in close conference with the porter's wife over some mysterious compound of bread, fat, and hot water, which they had been manufacturing. Where on earth she got in the daytime no one could ever make out; but Mr. Ledbury had a suspicion that she had something to do at some of the hospitals, as he occasionally saw her flitting about the Parvis Notre Dame, near the Hôtel Dieu; but whether she officiated as nurse, or *sage femme*, was never determined. Jack Johnson, who had no particular affection for old women in general, and landladies in particular, said that she blacked shoes and shaved cats on the Pont Neuf; but he evidently spoke with a prejudiced mind.

It was a bright, cheering morning, and the rays of the autumnal sun shone from the clear sky, unclouded by the blacks or smoke which

the coal fires disgorge into the air of London. There was a transparency in the atmosphere unknown in our foggy climate, and, attendant upon it, an exhilaration of spirits—a sort of indefinite wish to become a balloon, a bird, or a sky-rocket, and dart up joyously at once to the blue expanse above. Having despatched their breakfast, Aimée proceeded to wash the white crockery—the plain white service, of which we see so little in England, and which always reminds us so forcibly of the Continent. She had recovered from her languor, and was now singing, whilst she performed her task, as merrily as *grisettes* only can sing, and very joyous indeed withal over her occupation, for, next to dancing and hot *galette*, Aimée, in common with her class, was never so happy as when putting the *ménage* in order. Johnson and Ledbury were leaning out of window and inspecting the contiguous chimney-pots—the former gentleman also indulging the neighbours with a few vague attempts to blow the French horn, which Jules had left behind him for fear he should tumble over or into it on his way home. Ledbury was lost in a chain of surmises as to what made the French people so fond of keeping birds, as he looked down upon the various cages outside the windows; and reflecting upon the penny hen-bullfinches he used to buy in the City Road, which always died the next day, being mortally nipped in the neck by the vendor when he introduced his hand down the old stocking to pull them out of the cage.

“I say, Leddy,” exclaimed Johnson, as he stopped in his performance to tak breath, looking rather warm and apoplectic, like a Triton with the scarlet fever, “what shall we do to-day?”

“Anything you like until five,” replied Ledbury; “and then, you know, we are going to dine on the boulevards.”

“Well—let me think what is best to be done,” returned Johnson, sounding a few wild notes to assist reflection, and then suddenly adding, “What capital things for fun these French horns are, especially when you are close to them in the orchestra of a theatre!”

Mr. Ledbury did not see the great enjoyment derived from such proximity—in fact, he thought quite otherwise, and therefore ventured to ask his friend in what the diversion consisted.

“Filling them with peas,” answered Jack, “when the musicians go out between the plays. You should see what a shower the performer blows forth when he comes back again and tries his first note! Are you much of an equestrian?”

“I have ridden donkeys at Hampstead and Blackheath,” returned Ledbury, half smiling at his vivacious friend’s rapid shots from one subject to another.

“That’s very low,” said Johnson, “unless you mounted without a saddle, and sat quite back in the true charity-boy style; then of course, the perfect assumption of the habits of the common classes made the amusement aristocratic. Why didn’t you have a pony?”

“Because the donkeys were half-price—ninepence an hour, including the boy to run behind, and the pins in the stick. But why do you ask?”

“Not having much to do,” said Johnson, “I vote for a trip to the

Bois de Boulogne. You have never been there, and I want to see how you look outside a horse—I should say very stylish in those clothes."

Truth to tell, Ledbury had some misgivings on the subject; but the desire to distinguish himself overcame his scruples, and he consented to go. Aimée received a special invitation to accompany them, coupled with the promise of a donkey all to herself when they got there; and they likewise proposed to call upon Jules and Henri, and request the pleasure of their society.

Toilets are soon made in the Quartier Latin; and ten minutes after they had decided where to go the trio stood on the landing outside the chamber of the young artists at the Hôtel Nassau, in the Rue de la Harpe, principally guided to the door by various diverting sketches and likenesses of the proprietor of the house, drawn with chalk and charcoal on the walls. When they rang at the bell, Henri came to admit them, and they entered the *suite* of one room and a kitchen pertaining to their friends. The chamber was much in the style of their own, with the exception that it was rather more scantily furnished—the literal *ameublements* consisting of a table, two chairs, a wooden box, and the bellows. The sleeping-places were formed by two lockers artfully let into the wall, which, as they were not very broad, it was charitable to suppose were very deep, and that the occupant contrived by some ingenious process, acquired by great study, to penetrate their hidden recesses feet first, and then slumber as he best might with his head at the opening, like a human cannon appearing at an embrasure or port-hole in the wall of an apartment. They had apparently been discussing some poached eggs for breakfast, which a culinary odour informed Jack Johnson had been prepared by themselves over a handful of incandescent charcoal in a small *fourneau*; and now Henri was drawing "a soldier of the middle ages" on the ceiling with a burnt cork tied to the end of an old fencing foil; and Jules, in an easy attitude, with his feet considerably higher than his head, and without cravat or shoes, was enjoying a morning pipe.

As the young artists did not feel much inclined for work that day, and were speculating upon what they should do with themselves, they agreed very readily to accompany Ledbury and his companions to the Bois de Boulogne. They were not longer arranging their dress than their predecessors, and in five minutes the party started in procession, Jack Johnson leading the way with Aimée on his arm—the admiration and envy of all the Quartier—and then Jules and Henri, with Mr. Ledbury attached to them, who, being outside, was seldom on the pavement, sometimes in the mud, and very frequently indeed in the gutter. In this order they crossed the river to the Tuileries, where, the space being broader for their promenade, they all five walked abreast, Jules amusing himself by imitating the French horn, as he played the duct in "Puritani," and making Ledbury unconsciously march in time, with a warlike bearing, at his side.

"That's Cleopatra's needle," said Johnson to Ledbury, as they passed through the garden gates to the Place de la Concorde, and came

near the Theban obelisk in the centre. "They are going to bring over her thimble next year, and the Viceroy of Egypt has hopes of discovering the entire work-box."

"I do not quite understand the meaning of the birds and black beetles which are engraved about it," said Ledbury.

"They were done three thousand five hundred years ago," replied Johnson, "so that styles have altered since then; but it is supposed to have been a cheap public method of teaching the Egyptian charity children zoology. It's astonishing how like the birds are to those of the present day."

"But some of them are dressed in short pea-coats, and walking upright," observed Ledbury.

"I believe it was the custom of the birds in ancient Egypt," replied Jack. "Don't you think so, Aimée—eh?"

"Yes, good-morning everriwell," answered the *grisette*, smiling, and proud of her English.

They now approached the Champs Elysées, a spot presumed to derive its name from being a most earthly-looking place with a perfect absence of anything like grass. It was almost too early in the day for the usual crowd of visitors, except two or three *bonnes* with their monkey-jacket children, who were tossing balls about, and pulling their headless wooden horses into everybody's way. Jack amused himself by making hideous faces at the children until they cried; or grasping a handful of their balloon-like trousers, and running them along the ground upon tiptoe, to the great indignation of their nurses. Jules and Henri amused Aimée by keeping up a perpetual fire of slang with the proprietors of the camera-obscuras, and other perambulatory exhibitions, and addressing sundry speeches to a few grown-up babies, who were gravely circling in the roundabouts of the *Jeu de Bague*—a remnant of the old sport of tilting at the ring—or procuring an amusing emetic in a flight of four ships, which went up and down as they revolved. Then they came to a conjurer, whom Jack sadly put out by baulking his tricks, all of which he could do; and, finally stopped a short time to watch a travelling lecturer upon electricity, who was amusing his audience by discharging bottles of gas with a spark, and blowing the corks out into the air. He, moreover, electrified individuals at four sous each, and soldiers—there are always crowds of soldiers in the Champs Elysées—for nothing; because since their pay amounts to nearly two sous a day, more or less, they cannot afford to spend much in luxuries, and so they prefer all those which are gratuitous. All Jack's powers of persuasion could not induce Mr. Ledbury to be electrified, he having been once talked over to dip his hands into the two basins of water at the Polytechnic Institution, which threw him into a paroxysm of twitchings, from which he did not recover for some time. Aimée, who looked upon the lecturer as a species of necromancer in every-day clothes, was immensely gratified, although she had seen all his experiments a hundred times before; and nothing but the anticipation of a ride drew her from the spot. Mr. Ledbury contributed ten centimes towards the funds of the exhibition, and in return received a succession of bows from the lecturer

so rapid and animated that they could only have been produced by attaching his own neck to the prime conductor of the machine.

Laughing and chattering, singing the choruses of interminable songs, and playing off perpetual small practical jokes upon each other, in which Mr. Ledbury was usually the victim, the party approached the magnificent Arc de l'Etoile—which Jack Johnson informed his friend was erected to celebrate the victory gained by the French over the Prussians and English at Waterloo—and before long they turned off to the left from the Neuilly road, and arrived at the Bois de Boulogne. There are always various beasts of burden standing for hire in this locality, and Aimée was all impatience for the ride; but the journey thither had made them somewhat hungry, and Johnson proposed a council to decide where they should feed. Mr. Ledbury wished to patronise a decent-looking tavern in the neighbourhood, and they therefore went towards it.

“Garçon!” shouted Jules, as they reached the tavern, “qu’avez vous à manger?”

“De tout, monsieur,” was of course the reply.

Jack Johnson immediately inquired if oysters were included in the everything.

“Oui, monsieur—elles sont de mardi dernier.”

“Oh, par exemple!” cried Aimée, laughing. “Des huitres de huit jours!—merci, garçon!”

“Mais de prêt—de prêt?” exclaimed Johnson, “qu’avez vous de prêt?”

The man drew in a long breath, and then uttered with a volubility only acquired by hourly practice—

“Du lapin, des pigeons, du bœuf, des côtelettes, du filet, des rognons, des lentilles, et du fromage.”

“Et après?”

“Nous avons des pommes, des poires, du raisin, des mendiens, et des marrons,” repeated the *garçon* all in a breath.

“Well, then, we don’t want anything,” said Johnson.

Jules here explained that they should pay very dear at this inn for what they had, so that he thought it would be better to buy some eggs at a shop he would point out, and have them cooked by a *marchand de vin*, who would make them into an omelette if they bought their wine there. Mr. Ledbury and Johnson thought the plan excellent, as did Henri and Aimée, who, providing they got somebody to give them something to eat somewhere, had little anxiety respecting the scene of the banquet; and the point being settled, they began to think about their equestrian diversion.

They experienced little difficulty in procuring steeds, but had some trouble in getting Mr. Ledbury, whose courage rather slackened as the moment approached, to mount one. And there was a singularly unsafe look about all the horses that were exhibited for hire, more especially about the fore-legs, which inclined towards the hind ones, as if the animal was practising to stand with all his feet on the top of a post like an Indian goat. At last, however, they got him to cross a small broken-kneed pony, with the assurance that they would not

go fast. Aimée was placed upon the only donkey they could find, which Mr. Ledbury's inherent gallantry alone prevented him from appropriating to himself; and the rest were soon mounted to their satisfaction, except Jack Johnson, who got on a side-saddle, which immediately turned round with him, and shot him on to the ground; and Jules who would squeeze himself into one of the chair-seats, evidently too small, which compressed him so that he had considerable difficulty in getting out again. But after a few ludicrous disasters—all was arranged; and Mr. Ledbury, who formed a not inapt resemblance to a clothes-peg on a line, grew quite bold, and even ventured to beat the pony with a switch, and use imaginary spurs, guiding the animal by a curiously fragile contrivance of string, old straps, tin, and bits of worn-out chain, which the owner conceived to be a bridle. Not having amongst them sufficient money to leave as a deposit for the horses, they took a boy with them, who was also to act as Aimée's running-footman; and the *gamin*, by a series of violent pantomimic attitudes and unearthly noises, finally got all the animals into a canter; Mr. Ledbury keeping a firm grasp on the pommel of the apparatus which represented the saddle.

They rode about the avenues of the wood for a short time, indulging in various facetious performances; amongst which, Jack Johnson attempted to stand on the back of his horse, after the manner of Mr. Stickney, and even to ride two at once: both which attempts were concluded by his downfall. And then after a while, when their appetite reminded them of the proposed meal, Jules offered to conduct them to a place where the eggs were to be bought, and forthwith led the way to a *dépôt*, which combined the attractions of a chandler's shop, a "wine-vaults," and a bun-house.

"I think I should like to ask for the eggs," said Ledbury. "It will be a little practice for me in French."

"Go at it at once, then," said Jack Johnson; "we'll wait here. You need not get off, or perhaps you may have a difficulty in getting on again. Ride up to the door; it looks more imposing."

And, acting on his advice, Mr. Ledbury approached the *épiciers*'s.

Now the shop, like many others, had its floor some two or three steps below the level of the ground outside, and at the side of the door as you entered was a species of trellis-work screen, to keep unlawful appropriators from walking into the articles displayed in the window without permission. As Ledbury rode up to the door, saying his speech over to himself, which consisted of the question "*Arvey-roo des uffs?*" some imp of mischief prompted Jack Johnson to the following trick:—He asked Aimée for a pin, and being supplied with one by the young lady, after that digital investigation of various portions of the dress common with females when a pin is demanded, he inserted it quietly into the haunch of Mr. Ledbury's steed, just as he was preparing to speak. The pony, not liking this acupuncture, sprang forward. The small half-wicket that closed the entrance, with a remarkably persevering bell, suspended behind it, gave way, and the fore-feet of the animal stumbled down the steps, Ledbury, pony and all, bundled into the shop. But this was not all. To save himself in his fall, he

caught at the lattice-work on his right ; it yielded, and with it a small shelf that ran across the window, supporting sundry *carafons* of brandy-cherries and preserved peaches, small bottles of liqueurs, and a store of *bonbons*, and dirty sweetmeats resembling treacle-ice. Amidst this terrible *chute*, and covered by its ruins, did Mr. Ledbury enter a shop to buy eggs !

A terrible uproar followed. The master of the establishment, who was luxuriating upon a dinner of cold artichokes in some secret parlour, bolted out in the wildest manner possible ; and not perceiving Ledbury in his haste (who was performing some curious postures on the floor, resembling the antics of W. H. Payne when he has sat down on a hot warming-pan in a pantomime), tumbled over him, and began to kick blindly and desperately against a sack of *haricots blancs*, thinking it was the intruder, until he affected its downfall also. Johnson was screaming with laughter at the door ; Jules and Henri were equally delighted ; Aimée, half amused, half frightened, after a minute's pause, began to laugh as heartily as the rest ; and the little boy who ran behind her, scared out of his wits, scampered off as fast as his legs would carry him. Of course the *marchand* let loose an avalanche of "*sacrés !*" and "*erré nom de tomates !*" as soon as he saw how things stood. But Mr. Ledbury, who really took a joke better than anyone else in the world—and it must be confessed he attributed his downfall to his bad riding, rather than to any malice prepense on the part of others—made a rapid offer of payment for the damage committed, which the others volunteered to share as far as their treasures would go. A few francs set all to rights ; and in addition, they purchased a quantity of eggs and bread, which were entrusted to the care of Aimée.

They then went back to the spot where they had hired the horses, not saying a word about the probable state of the knees of Mr. Ledbury's pony on the morrow ; and having found out a *marchand de vin*, whose establishment appeared likely to suit their purpose, they entered for their second *déjeûner*, and a very merry meal, yet strictly reasonable, they found it ; so much so, indeed, that Ledbury and Jack Johnson were surprised to perceive the time go so fast, when the hour approached for them to leave in order that they might dress and proceed to dine with their acquaintance of the preceding evening, according to promise.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE BOARDING-HOUSE ON THE BOULEVARDS, AND ECARTE.

THE *pension*, at whose *table d'hôte* M. Auguste Blaquart, as he was called, had invited Mr. Ledbury and his companion to meet him, was situated at the corner of one of the principal streets leading on to the Boulevard des Italiens, and occupied the entire first and second floors, above the *entresol* of one of the very fine houses which adorn this quarter of Paris.

Madame Lagrange, the mistress of the establishment, was about five-and-forty; but still a perfect symmetry of figure, and, to use a theatrical term, an admirable *making-up*, with the assistance of *bandoline*, rouge, and hair-dye, threw off ten or a dozen years from her real age in the eyes of the casual beholder. She was even now a fine woman—had travelled much and seen more, whilst an easy self-possession, a complete knowledge of the usages of good society, and the power of inspiring her guests with the feeling that they could not make very free with her, proved that she had at some time or other moved in a superior set, and adopted their happiest manners. Evidently French by birth—for every gesture, opinion, and expression showed it—she spoke Italian, German, and English with tolerable accuracy; and, perfectly competent to associate with the higher classes, she yet had tact enough to remove all uncomfortable feeling from those palpably her inferiors in the common attainments of good bringing up whom chance frequently brought her into contact with at her own table. Her husband, who never appeared until evening, when the card-tables were formed in the *salon*, was certainly beneath her in every respect. He aspired to the costume and general *tournure* of the *homme comme il faut*; and his gaudy toilet and occasionally bouncing talk dazzled many of the *pensionnaires*; but, compared with the really good conversation and demeanour of Madame Lagrange, he reminded one of placing the gayest of Madame Tussaud's creations by the side of one of Canova's statues; although even in this case many lovers of superficial glitter would prefer the former.

Who Blaquart himself was nobody had the least idea. He always took the bottom of the table in the absence of M. Lagrange, and there were many surmises that he had a share in the profits of the house. The English people, of whom there were always several staying here, "recommended on" from Boulogne and Calais, thought him a perfect gentleman; but the Parisians detected now and then some stray, careless action, or loose word, which had evidently been picked up in some questionable *quartier* of the city. And, indeed, one or two of the guests were sometimes astonished to meet him walking with very strange-looking persons, approaching in their dress and manners to those of a *chevalier d'industrie*—their clothes cut in the extreme style of seedy fashion, and wearing their hats in that very scampish manner

which the class known and spoken of in England as "gents" adopt when they wish to be considered men about town.

Ledbury and Jack Johnson were tolerably punctual to their appointment; and after many various mistakes in the direction, which Mr. Ledbury did not perfectly recollect, having left the thin glazed card, with the microscopic name upon it, which Blaquart gave him, at home, they at length got to the house. But here again they were some little time finding out precisely where to go, for the *port cochère* served as an entrance severally to a printer's, a paper-hanger's, a chocolate manufactory, and the *bureau* of an asphalté company; and the sanctity of each of these establishments was invaded before they pitched upon the inscription at the foot of the staircase, "PENSION AU PREMIER," which led to Madame Lagrange's *suite* of apartments.

They entered the drawing-room, where most of the guests were assembled; and Blaquart, who was ready to receive them, immediately came up in a most overwhelmingly polite manner, and introduced them to the mistress of the house. It was rather dark; and as the French people in every station never light a candle an instant before there is the slightest necessity for one, they could not see the company very distinctly, which somewhat comforted Mr. Ledbury, who would have been terribly fluttered at facing a large room full of strangers. He backed into an obscure corner of the room with Johnson and Blaquart, where he remained until dinner was announced, much gratified to find that English was as much spoken in the room as French.

The appearance of the *salle à manger*, when the door was thrown open which communicated with the drawing-room, quite dazzled Mr. Ledbury by its brilliancy. There was, however, little time to ruminate, for the guests hurried in, each person taking his proper place, whilst John and his companion, being the last comers, occupied the two seats at the bottom of the table, one on either side of Blaquart. The table itself looked exceedingly well, with its profusion of cut glass and wax-lights, and the napkins folded and twisted into cocked-hats, fans, roses, fools'-caps, and all kinds of fanciful shapes. Every person had also a handsome *carafe* of wine before him, which the English usually drank during dinner, and the French made to last for a fortnight—the property of each individual being designated by a card tied round the neck of the bottle, a piece of tape, or occasionally a small chaplet like a candle ornament.

A pretty English girl, introduced to Mr. Ledbury as Miss Bernard, sat next to him, and her mother, an exceedingly fine lady in an appalling turban, opposite. Then, higher up, came Mr. Bernard, a good tempered, John Bull sort of a man, whose observations drew down perpetual black looks and glances of condensed thunder from his wife; and on the other side was Mr. John Bernard, a very elegant young gentleman indeed, with his hair curled, and parted behind, a figured light satin stock, and his wristbands turned over his coat, as if he had washed his hands when too late for dinner, and in the hurry forgotten to turn his cuffs down. M. Coquet, an old bachelor, who came there every day to dine, was placed opposite to Madame Provost, a very fine

woman, with eyes and teeth like a hairdresser's doll in the Burlington Arcade, and about the same expression of countenance. Then higher up still was a young Frenchman of fortune—at least, a fortune for a Frenchman—named Achille Derval, and facing him an Italian *contessa* or any other rank Madame Lagrange chose to give her for the setting-off of her establishment, who did nothing but talk about her villa at Fiesole, and make *les grands yeux* at her *vis-à-vis*, who was considerably her junior; and above them were several people, whose names and stations Mr. Ledbury could not catch from the distance. Altogether they sat down about twenty in number; and, taking one with another, like a bag of mixed biscuits, presented a pleasing variety. There was the usual confusion attendant upon settling into their places; and then, when everybody had got their soup and finished it, the usual buzz of boarding-house conversation began. Blaquart inquired of Mrs. Bernard, in broken English, where she had been that day.

"Oh! we had a delightful walk to the Madeline," replied the lady, "and returned by the Rue de Rivoli to the Place Vendôme. My friend, Mrs. De Robinson, of Eaton Place, recommended me to do so. What a noble square it is!"

"Don't see anything in it, my love," interrupted Mr. Bernard.

"Young De Robinson says that there is nothing like it in London." said Mr. John.

"Nonsense!" continued the father. "Put the Nelson Column into the middle of Euston Square; do away with the New Road, and knock down all the railings: then see what that would make. The only place worth going to is St. Cloud."

The last word was pronounced as spelt.

"My dear papa," quietly observed Miss Bernard, "I wish you would call it Saint *Clew*."

"Why should I, Annie?—it is St. Cloud. c.l.o.u.d. is 'cloud' all the world over, from the skies to a Turnham Green omnibus."

Mrs. Bernard looked as if she had eaten a capsicum in mistake.

"Paris is a very interesting place," said Mr. Ledbury to the young lady, picking up a little courage to speak without blushing—an acquisition which the *grisettes* had certainly taught him.

"Oh, yes! I am so charmed with it!" exclaimed Miss Bernard, with much enthusiasm. "Miss De Robinson said I should be."

"I shall be very glad to get home," said Mr. Bernard. "I have not made one good dinner since I have been here—all wishy-washy messes. I was much happier before."

"You have been here before, sir?" asked Blaquart.

"Oui, monsson; after the peace; then I saw Paris indeed. I was at an English hotel. I came down to an English breakfast at ten; read an English paper until twelve; walked about the city with an English *laquais-de-place* until four; sat down to an English dinner at six; and was lighted to bed by an English chambermaid at night. That's the way to see a foreign country properly.—Here, Alphonse, Jack's—what's your name?—get me some of that *veau-de-ville*."

"Plait-il, monsieur?" asked the attendant, not exactly comprehending him.

“Mon père a besoin d’un petit pièce de vol-au-vent,” said Mr. John Bernard, looking towards Ledbury, as much as to say, “Did you hear that, sir?” And then he passed his fingers through his hair, and amidst the convolutions of his satin stock, after the usual manner of very nice young gentlemen.

“I think we have made the best use of our time,” observed Mrs. Bernard to the company in general.

“Have you been to the Chaumière, ma’am?” asked Mr. Ledbury, perceiving nobody replied.

“Oh dear, no!” ejaculated Mrs. Bernard, tossing her turban about like the ship on the head of the sailor who always chooses wet weather to sing in the streets. “I believe it is a horridly low place!”

Mr. Ledbury felt very awkwardly situated indeed.

“We have some friends,” continued the lady, “in Eaton Place—you know the De Robinson’s of Eaton Place, I suppose—at least by name?”

It was evident that the De Robinsons were the great acquaintances of the Bernard family: everybody has De Robinson in their circle.

“I have not that pleasure,” replied Mr. Ledbury.

“Ah! that’s a pity,” said Mrs. Bernard; “they are most nice persons. They told me, when they were in Paris, someone wanted them to see the Chaumière; but they were glad they did not. The person who recommended it was nobody, as it turned out. He scribbled things, I believe, for his livelihood—quite unrepresentable.”

Jack Johnson, who appeared to have turned his hand to everything in his lifetime, had once been a bit of an author himself, and this speech somewhat annoyed him.

“Dear, dear!” he thought, “if the *parvenu* families of London—in most cases remarkably obtuse people—whose position in society is so nicely balanced between the exclusive and the vulgar as to resemble a Logan-stone, which the slightest influence will incline either way or tumble down altogether; if these good people knew how the ‘scribblers’ see through their struggles for copied display, like a piece of gauze, and in turn look down upon *them*, they would not be best pleased.”

But Jack Johnson did not say a word of this. He merely remarked that if travellers wished to observe the characteristics of a people, they should see every phase of life; but if they merely travelled for the sake of saying afterwards that they had been, or because everybody else did, the end was just as well answered by walking about the fashionable streets.

The *septette* at the bottom of the table had all their conversation to themselves; for the guests above them, being all foreigners, placed a barrier between their communications as obstructive as a Jura custom-house. Mr. John Bernard now and then addressed a few words to Madame Provost; but, as she was principally occupied in playing the agreeable to Achille Derval, his attempts at gallant speeches did not create the sensation he desired, and he became

silently dignified. M. Coquet, on the other side finding himself next to the "Countess," was exerting himself to the utmost to be polite, and consequently did not say much to his neighbours; and the talk at the upper end of the table was kept up in one unceasing murmur, Madame Lagrange apparently answering the questions or replying to the remarks of everybody at once, whether relative to Duprez, Gavarni's last sketch, Milford Seymour et ses "bouldogues," Rachel, or the proceedings of the *Chambre des Députés*.

The ladies retired when dinner was over, and with them the majority of the gentlemen. Our friends, however, remained with the Bernards—the head of the family persisting in sitting to finish his bottle, as he would have done in England. Blaquart also kept his seat as croupier, and was particularly polite—too much so for Jack Johnson—laughing at all the jokes, whether he understood them or not.

"Do you go much on the river in London?" asked Mr. John Bernard of Ledbury, with a patronising air.

"Very frequently," was the reply.

"In a four or a six?"

"Generally in an iron steamer," answered Mr. Ledbury.

"Oh!" said Mr. John, "then you don't know any of the *Leander* men?"

"I cannot say I do," returned Mr. Ledbury; but I know some that belong to the *Thunder* and the *Bridesmaid*. They are very civil."

Mr. John Bernard here looked very contemptuously at Mr. Ledbury; upon which Jack Johnson whispered to his friend that if he, Mr. John Bernard, put on the same expression again, he would give him such an extraordinary kick that he should keep it to take to the British Museum as a curiosity when he got home. And Mr. John Bernard, perceiving that his companion was irate, endeavoured to turn the conversation, and began talking about the sweet wager-boat which his friend young De Robinson had bought at Searle's; and then walked very grandly into the drawing-room, whither Blaquart followed him. Jack Johnson and Ledbury waited behind a little while until Mr. Bernard had told them two very long and interesting anecdotes—one about a large trout he had caught with a single gut; and the other about some certain partridges that got up in a furze field and flew over the road into a copse, where he brought down two of them. Then Jack Johnson who never by any chance allowed himself to be outdone, related the story of his catching a porpoise in the Basingstoke Canal; and Mr. Ledbury, warming with the subject and the wine, was commencing the account of an excellent morning's sport he had in the *Serpentine*, when the old gentleman went into a refreshing sleep, and our two friends into the drawing-room.

They found that several strangers had arrived since dinner, principally gentlemen, who were chatting and vandyking about the room, or paying French compliments to Madame Lagrange, who was making tea and coffee in a kind of boudoir attached to the *salon*. Miss Bernard, having been requested by her mamma to play that beautiful waltz which

Miss De Robinson brought her from Berlin, was performing it very indifferently on the piano, under the delusion that she was entertaining her auditors; and the Countess having made an attack upon Derval, to the extreme wrath of Madame Provošt, M. Coquet turned his attention to Mr. Ledbury. Our hero was enabled to understand what the Frenchman said tolerably well, as he spoke slowly; and they were now enjoying a disquisition upon the extreme politeness of the lower orders in England, their love of refined amusements, and the superlative gaiety of a London Sunday.

As soon as tea was finished, a few card-tables were placed about the room, and several couples commenced playing *écarté*. Blaquart was most anxious that Johnson and Ledbury should form a party at the game; but they steadfastly refused, apparently much to his chagrin, although he still kept up his extreme politeness.

Whilst the usual guests of the house were in the room the play was exceedingly limited; but when M. Lagrange arrived, about ten o'clock, fresh games were immediately formed, and in twenty minutes nearly the whole of the company were occupied in playing or betting; and the tables were soon covered with *rouleaus* of napoleons and five franc pieces.

"I expected as much," said Johnson quietly to Ledbury. "This place, although ostensibly a *pension* is in reality a private gambling-house."

"What makes you think so?"

"The style of the players. We were evidently invited to be pigeoned. I can see the set is at present made at Derval; and the 'Countess,' as they call her, is playing with him."

"Do you know *écarté*?" asked young Bernard of Johnson.

"I have no objection to a game or two with you," replied Jack; "but I should not like to mix with the others. The French seem to have a most singular luck in turning up the king."

Mr. John Bernard crossed the room to get a pack of cards, and Jack whispered to Ledbury—

"Now see me take the shine out of him. I wanted the chance."

They sat down together and played a few games, Ledbury looking on, perfectly contented in being permitted to score for Jack Johnson on a piece of card cut into snips and angles, which fashion that inventive gentleman had borrowed from an *estaminet* in the Quartier Latin. At length Mr. John found himself so continually losing, that he began to complain of a headache as an excuse for leaving off.

"'Tis the *vin ordinaire*," said Jack Johnson, "you may depend upon it. I thought you took too much at dinner."

Mr. John Bernard was indignant at the idea that anybody who went on the river in London and knew some of the Leander men, could allow *vin ordinaire* to have any effect upon him.

"It cannot be that wretched stuff," he replied.

"It is a great deal stronger than you think for," said Jack; "and you would find it so if you drank it quickly, instead of taking your time about it."

"I don't see what that has to do with it," observed Mr. John.

"Now, look here," continued Johnson; "I'll bet you fifteen or twenty francs that I make the whole of this pack of cards into 'pancakes' before you can drink off a half-pint tumbler of Chablis."

"Oh, nonsense! I would not take the bet; it would be downright robbery."

"As you like. Will you bet twenty francs?"

Mr. John Bernard, who had lost about that sum to Jack Johnson, thought there would be no great harm in getting his money back again, so said that he would make the wager.

"But you will give me good wine?" he asked.

"You shall choose it yourself," was the reply, "and I will drink some first."

Ledbury being appointed a witness of the bet, Jack left the room, and procured the Chablis from the butler. He then invaded the kitchen; and having established himself instantaneously in the favour of all the servants, by paying them a collective compliment, and kissing Madame Provost's *femme de chambre*, he got the cook to heat a tumbler-full of the wine until it was nearly boiling, and with this he returned into the drawing-room.

"Are you ready?" he inquired of Mr. John Bernard.

"Perfectly."

"Then fire away," said Jack; "but don't spill any over that pretty stock, because it would be a pity. You'll find the wine rather warm; but I presume that is of no consequence. We made no agreement as to temperature—it was merely as to quality."

As Jack rapidly began to make the cards into pancakes, Mr. Bernard put his lips to his wine, and saw that he was "done"! but still, thinking that he might yet accomplish the task within time, he attempted to swallow it. He sipped, and sneezed, and winced, and coughed—his eyes watered, and his throat appeared losing its skin, but all to no avail. Jack's agile fingers completed their task before the tumbler was half emptied, and he tossed the last pancake upon the table in triumph as he added—

"I'll trouble you for twenty francs."

There was no getting out of it; and Mr. John Bernard's anger at losing his money was only exceeded by the feeling of humbled importance which he experienced. Throwing the money on the table with a very bad grace; he marched out of the room without saying a word to anybody; but inwardly putting Jack Johnson down as a swindler, and determining upon his return home to see if he could not retrieve his loss by taking in young De Robinson, or some of the Leander men, in the same manner.

During all this time the play had been proceeding at the other tables; and Ledbury and Johnson turned towards one of them to inspect the gamblers. There was none of that agitation and convulsion of countenance which they had expected to find in the faces of the players. They all appeared as collected as if they had merely been gambling for sugar-plums; and, whatever they might have felt inwardly, they did not betray the least token of anxiety by their

outward demeanour. Now and then, to be sure, when a heavy stake was swept away, the owner muttered a subdued "*sacré!*" but this was all. The Countess, who was still playing with Derval, and apparently losing large sums, seemed far more careful in studying an attitude, in which her round white arm might be seen to the best advantage upon the dark-green velvet of the card-table, than in looking after the chances of the game; although an attentive observer might have discovered that her lip occasionally quivered—but only for an instant—when her adversary made an important point. Lagrange and Blaquart were watching the game very closely, and apparently with anything but pleasure, for Derval was winning everything before him; and Jack Johnson had perfection enough to see that the scheme had failed, and that the intended pigeon was going on in a fair way to break the bank with which the two others had evidently supplied his fair companion. After a short period had elapsed, at a signal from Lagrange, the Italian threw down her cards, declaring she could play no more against such a continuous run of fortune.

Ledbury and Johnson were leaving the room with the intention of going home, when Derval came up to them, and inquired of the latter in which direction their road lay. Finding that they were bound for the Quartier Latin, he hoped they would allow him the pleasure of accompanying them, to which they immediately acquiesced.

"I live in the Faubourg St. Germain myself," he continued, "but at all events we can go together as far as the river. We will first have a bottle of champagne, and then depart."

The wine was ordered in and paid for by Derval, in celebration, as he called it, of his good fortune. One bottle produced another, and it was nearly one o'clock in the morning when the party left the *pension* and proceeded on their way home.

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CHAPTER X.

THE WINE-SHOP IN THE MARCHÉ DES INNOCENTS, AND THE MURDER ON THE PONT NEUF.

THOSE whom business or pleasure has compelled to be about at a late hour in the streets of Paris must have been struck with the dead quiet which reigns throughout the city after the bustle attendant upon the close of the theatres has subsided, and the principal cafés on the adjacent boulevards—the latest quarters of the town—have closed their doors. There are no night-taverns, as in London; neither is there that undying murmur and motion in the streets which never allows our city to sleep. By midnight the French capital is as

tranquil as a city of the dead—nothing breaking the silence but the orderly round of the *garde municipale*, or the occasional apparition of some wretched wanderer crawling about the most secluded and dimly-lighted streets, because he has no home to go to—not even the miserable shelter which four sous will procure him in one of the *garnis* of the low faubourgs.

It was a fine clear night; and not feeling much inclined to go to bed, at the same time that the fresh air added to their excitement, Johnson, Ledbury, and Derval sauntered along the line of boulevards until they arrived at the corner of Rue St. Denis, when, recollecting that they were coming considerably out of their way, they turned down the street. There was little at this time to attract attention, and the very lights in the house had been extinguished, whilst the dull lamps slung across the streets appeared doubly gloomy after the gas in the thoroughfares they had just quitted. On they went until they came to a turning to the right, leading into the *Marché des Innocents*, when Derval insisted upon their going through the market and having something to drink at a wine-shop which he knew to be open all night. Neither Ledbury nor Johnson were anxious for this intended treat, having both taken quite enough already; but Derval, who was sufficiently excited to be extremely obstinate, would make them come with him to Paul Niquet's—a *marchand de vin*, who never closes his doors, and who conducts his establishment in the same manner as the early houses about Covent Garden Market.

A bright lamp over the door guided them to the shop, but this was scarcely necessary, for there was such a tumult within that it might be heard at the other end of the *halle*. Derval tapped with his knuckles against the door, and was immediately admitted, together with Ledbury and Johnson. The small low room was filled with a throng of the lower orders—who, in point of dirt and repulsive appearance, might have ranked on the same plane as the denizens of that part of St. Giles's known as "The Rookery"—consisting of *chiffonniers*, porters attached to the market, *charretiers*, and men belonging to the *chantiers*, or places where firewood is stored for sale, in company with bargemen from the lighters containing charcoal below the *Quai de l'École*. Some were fast asleep upon the table and benches, waiting for the opening of the markets; others were quarreling and vociferating loudly in their cups, and the remainder were lounging against the walls and counter as they drank their wine or brandy, or devoured some coarse bread, and coarser cold meat, for what was to them a breakfast.

Two or three of the most sinister-looking amongst them gathered round the fresh comers as they entered, apparently with the intention of hustling them; and Johnson told Ledbury quietly to put his handkerchief into his hat, and keep his hands in his pockets. Indeed, they were both anxious, now they had seen what the place was like, to make their exit as soon as they could; but Derval kept pressing them to take some of the cognac he had ordered, continually saying that he was coming away directly. To satisfy him, they put their lips to it, and then their companions gave the remains to a gigantic porter,

who was standing at his side. The men proposed the health of the new-comer previously to drinking the spirits, and this being received by the other parties with acclamations, Derval announced his intention of treating them all to whatever they liked best. Renewed applause followed this offer, and they crowded round the bar—some of them awakening their fellows to partake of the young Frenchman's bounty, which the master of the shop began to serve out as fast as he was able.

The riot and noise increased with the supply of liquor: and Johnson was more than ever anxious to get away, knowing that Derval had a large sum of money about him—the fruits of his winning at the *jeuion*—and feeling certain that if he was not robbed, at all events he would make away with a greater portion of it in treating the people about him. At last, however, they prevailed upon him to come with them—Johnson offering to pay for what had been served out, thinking he could get through it better than his companion, and without the chance of being cheated. But this Derval would not allow, and, with the true heedlessness of an intoxicated man, he pulled a handful of five-franc pieces from his pocket, and threw them along the counter with careless force—some of them rolling off upon the floor, and directly provoking a violent struggle between two or three men, who stooped to scramble them up. Taking advantage of this temporary diversion, Johnson gave Ledbury the hint, and, getting Derval between them, they half persuaded, half forced him from the shop, although not without some opposition on the part of the *chiffoniers*, who appeared little inclined that they should part company.

“Well, thank God! we are out of that,” said Johnson, when they once more found themselves in the *Marché des Innocents*. “There would have been an awful riot if we had remained there much longer.”

“They are all good fellows,” observed Derval.

“No doubt of it,” replied Johnson; “but they do not carry their estimable qualities in their countenances. I never saw such a fearful set of ruffians in my life.”

“I shall not go home,” said Derval, leaning back obstinately as they came into the *Rue St. Honoré*. “I am too intoxicated.”

“Why, what are you to do?” replied Johnson; “you cannot keep in the streets all night.”

“I shall walk about and recover myself,” was the answer; “but I shall not go home.”

And as they approached the office of Laffitte's *Messageries*, he sat himself down upon one of the large stones against the wall, and announced his intention of not proceeding any further.

“Will he be safe if we leave him?” asked Ledbury.

“He will be quite safe *here* if he does not move,” replied Johnson. “The soldiers are always on guard, and will protect him. If he will not come, we cannot remain with him.”

“And are we to go home, then?”

“I suppose so,” returned Johnson, again endeavouring, but in vain, to get Derval to accompany them. “If I saw any of the municipal guard, I would send him to the guard-house. Will you give me your

watch to take care of, and what money you have?" he continued, addressing Derval.

"You may take my watch and my money," was the reply; "but I won't go home."

It was in vain that they continued to persuade him. He kept affirming that he should wait to recover himself before he went to bed; so that Johnson, seeing nothing was to be done with him, took the purse and watch, and, accompanied by Ledbury, left him where he had seated himself.

"He cannot lose much now, however," said Johnson. "I have got all his money, except a few loose francs, so that he can come to no great harm; and perhaps it is as well that he should wait a little before he goes home. He might set his curtains on fire if he went to bed in his present state."

They crossed the Rue St. Honoré, and, turning round the facade of the Louvre, arrived at the toll-gate of the Pont des Arts—a bridge for foot-passengers only, which conducted from the building just named to the Institute on the other side of the Seine. The man who took the money at the gate had not expected any more passengers that night, and was ensconced comfortably in his box fast asleep, having drawn down the glass in front of the pigeon-hole where payment was tendered. Johnson and Ledbury could not think of disturbing him to pay their two sous, and so walked on to the bridge without any interruption.

To our thinking, there is no situation in Paris which presents so picturesque a view as that obtained in looking up the river from the centre of the Pont des Arts towards the Ile de la Cité. It requires but little stretch of the imaginative faculties to imagine that the flight of time has been reversed, and that the fine old city, as it appeared in the romantic days of the *moyen âge* of France, once more rises up before us in its early beauty, so trifling a change has taken place in its general features. Below this point, succeeding epochs have wrought a great alteration in the leading physiognomy of the river's banks. The Tour de Nesle, with its harrowing associations and dark legends—the names of the infamous Marguerite de Bourgogne and the wily Buridan connected so intimately with its fearful records—have passed away. The grim turrets and fortified walls which formed the boundaries of the old Louvre no longer frown upon the Seine; whilst the rough Tour de Bois has given place to the finest picture-gallery in the world; and, lower down, the verdant expanse of the Pré aux Clercs, whereon, each summer's evening, the clerks of the Basoche and the students of Cluny mingled in the dance with the *grisettes* of the city, has been covered by modern and unromantic elevations. But above the bridge all is picturesque as formerly. The venerable and time-blackened towers of Notre Dame still rise in the same sullen grandeur above the surrounding edifices, as in the days when the names of Valois, Médicis, and Navarre were foremost in the chronicles of royalty. There are yet to be seen the pointed minarets of the Palais de Justice and Tour d'Horloge, where the first great clock in Paris was set up in 1370; and, nearer to the bridge, the fatal bell of St.

Germain l'Auxerrois—that dread tocsin which rang out the knell of the Huguenots—still sounds across the river at eventide. The only building of importance that now no longer exists is the Grand Châtelet, but this intrudes so little upon the line of the Quais as to make no great difference in the character of the view seen from the spot where Ledbury and Johnson now stopped.

The soft calm moonlight slumbered upon the old spires and buildings of the city, now wrapped in an impressive silence, broken only by the occasional challenges of the night-watch, or the chafing of the Seine as it whirled through the arches of the bridge in its turbulent course below the Pont Neuf. To the left, the river-front of the Louvre rose like some spectral palace in dreamy outline; the solitary sentinel who parades to and fro below the *façade* alone presenting evidence of life and motion in its precincts. The towers of the churches along the banks of the Seine now and then gave forth the sound of their sleepy chimes, fainter and fainter in the distance, and echoing for a while, died away, leaving the universal stillness more apparent. The tranquillity of the scene did not fail to have its effect upon both our friends, and they looked upon it in silence, each lost in its own reflections—Ledbury simply gazing with interest upon the fine view of a foreign city by moonlight, and Johnson recalling old times and associations with a sentiment which those who knew him most intimately would have given him little credit for exhibiting; since the world is apt to forget that the same acute perception of the humorous which imbues its possessor with so keen a relish for fun can assume an opposite aspect whenever matter of graver moment chances to cross its path—and with equal intensity.

They had lingered for about a quarter of an hour on the bridge, unwilling on either side to disturb the waking visions of the other, when their attention was suddenly aroused by a shrill cry in the direction of the Pont Neuf. Another and another succeeded; and now they could discern, by the light of the moon, the outline of two figures, apparently wrestling with each other, on the coping between the summit of the buttresses which form the small shops of that thoroughfare. Immediately after they appeared to be climbing the parapet, and, before a few seconds had elapsed, another cry broke the stillness, and one of the figures fell from the coping into the river below. At the same instant the sentinel at the statue of Henri Quatre discharged his musket, and the remaining individual disappeared immediately, as if he had fallen back upon the causeway of the bridge.

The whole of this transaction had taken up less time than the space occupied in reading the account of it, and Johnson and Ledbury were for the moment bewildered at the suddenness of the action. But the former soon recovered himself, and spoke hurriedly to his companion—

“There is foul play going on there,” he exclaimed. “Some one has been attacked, and thrown from the bridge. And see! he is fighting with the stream alongside the baths.”

Whilst he was speaking, the indistinct form of a man could be observed struggling in the water, and directly afterwards rising above it,

as he was borne by the force of the rapid current on to one of the shallows below the Ecole de Natation. He remained here for a minute : but the power of the stream overcame his efforts to stop upon the bank, and yielding to its strength, he rolled over and over upon the shingle, and then was again hurried on in deep water.

"He has sunk!" cried Ledbury, who was gazing at the river, half paralysed with fear.

"No, no; he is at the surface again," returned Johnson; but he has not strength to support himself. Run to the man at the gate," he continued, seizing Ledbury by the arm with nervous anxiety—"run to the man at the gate—do you hear?—and awaken him; we may yet be able to save him."

With the quickness of thought Johnson took his penknife from his pocket, and cutting the straps of his trousers, hastily drew off his boots, and threw them upon the platform of the bridge. Then, putting his hat upon one of the seats, he placed in it his money and Derval's watch and purse; and, throwing off his coat, vaulted over the parapet rail as Ledbury started to arouse the gatekeeper. Clinging to the light iron-work which forms the body of the bridge, and which everywhere afforded a firm hold to his muscular grasp, he slung himself, with fearful haste, from one beam to another; now swinging from the transverse ties, and now gliding down the uprights, until he reached the stonework from which they spring. The stream was still several feet below him; but nothing daunted, he threw himself into the river at once, casting aside all idea of danger in the excitement of the instant. The cold dark water closed over his head, and roared and bubbled in his ears as he sank some feet below the surface; but, re-appearing immediately he struck out towards the spot where he expected to find the victim. The stream was, however, too powerful to make any way against it. He perceived this in an instant, and turning towards one of the piers, he was enabled after much exertion, to cling to an iron boat ring, which was fixed into the stonework, fortunately within his grasp; and he had barely accomplished this feat when the individual he was endeavouring to preserve was borne through the arch, still throwing his arms about vaguely, in the agonies of a drowning man.

With an additional impetus, obtained from springing from the pier, Johnson immediately dashed through the current, and was at the side of the sufferer. A position of intense peril ensued. The dying man—for such he really was—made a desperate clutch at Johnson's arm as he approached him: and, succeeding in the attempt, in an instant they both sank. It was but a moment; for they rose again almost directly, the hold of the other still remaining the same.

"Leave go my arm!" gasped Johnson—"leave go my arm—we are both lost if—"

But the grasp of the sufferer tightened; and, in addition, he attempted to throw his leg round Johnson's in which he would have succeeded had not the other, with the tact of an expert swimmer, turned upon his side as far as the embrace of the other would permit, and thus prevented the lock which would have been inevitably fatal

to both. Again he endeavoured to cast him off, but to no purpose, and again they sank deeply into the roaring water. At last, as they rose once more to the surface, Johnson collected all his force for one effort, and contrived to shake the other off: at the same minute that he dived under him, and came up in his wake. Seizing him by his long hair, he was enabled to keep him away; and whilst he supported his head above water, they turned towards the bank.

In the meantime Ledbury had aroused the man at the toll gate of the bridge. The sentinel of the Louvre had also followed up the shot of the soldier beneath the statue on the Pont Neuf; and the roll of drums in the Carrousel showed that the alarm had spread. And now the bright muskets of the *garde municipale* were gleaming upon the Quai de l'École, and some on the other side of the river had reached the Pont des Arts: whilst others, directed by Ledbury's gestures rather than his words, hastened down the stairs and along the edge of the river, with the intention of affording Johnson what assistance they could offer. Returning over the bridge, and taking up his friend's hat and its contents, Ledbury followed the soldiers, who were at the side of the stream, and got up to them just as Johnson brought his charge to land. But human aid was now of no avail. A gush of bright arterial blood was pouring from a wound in the chest of the victim; and Johnson's dress, wet and disordered, bore traces of the same florid stream. And the courageous fellow himself sank down from pure exhaustion as he reached the bank.

The alarm had run like wildfire; and from the principal streets leading to the *quais* parties of the municipal guards were now hastening in the direction of the spot where Ledbury and his companion stood.

"They have secured the assassin, messieurs," observed a *gendarme*, who now joined the party. "He was disabled by a shot from the *factionnaire* on the Pont Neuf."

"And who is it?" asked several voices, eagerly.

"A porter of the *Marché des Innocents*. He must have watched the deceased from that neighbourhood."

In a minute or two Johnson recovered his breath; and, motioning the guard on one side, that the moonlight might not be intercepted, he parted the long wet hair from the face of the murdered man, and looked upon his features. A cry of surprise and horror broke from him as he recognised the countenance of Derval!

CHAPTER XI.

THE BAL MASQUE AND THE GUILLOTINE.

IT is the custom in certain melodramas, when any events occur which, although imperatively necessary to the elaboration of the plot, would weary the spectators by their actual representation, to inform the audience, through the medium of the play-bill, that "a lapse of five years is supposed to take place between Acts I. and II." And furthermore, it is the habitude of the management, in order that a slight semblance of reality may be given to this supposition, to keep the aforesaid audience waiting as long as the patience of the house generally, and the pit and gallery especially, will permit. Now the first of these arrangements—for the second has merely been mentioned parenthetically, as bearing upon the subject, but having nothing in the world to do with our own case—is a salutary one; for it saves an immense deal of yawning, and obtrusive attempts to extend cramped legs. And so, in like manner, we beg our considerate reader to imagine that five weeks have elapsed since the events of the last chapter.

Little has occurred in this time to interest or amuse. The recollection of the murder hung upon the minds of our friends for some time, and they felt little inclination to join in any gaiety—indeed, Ledbury was very anxious to return home again, the more so as he received several letters from home, in all of which his family appeared anxious to have him with them at Christmas. The autumn was giving place to winter; and the trial of the man concerned in Derval's assassination had taken place, ending in his condemnation to the last punishment the law can order.

"It is exceedingly fortunate for us," observed Johnson to Ledbury, as they left the court at the close of the trial, "that the murderer was taken in the fact, or it would have placed us in an unpleasant situation, to say the least of it. We left together that night; we were seen with poor Derval in the wine-shop; and I had his watch and purse in my possession. People have been hung before now where the chain of circumstantial evidence was much slighter."

No appeal had been made by the criminal to the Court of Cassation against the sentence of the Cour d'Assize, and the sensation gradually subsided as time passed on. And even Ledbury and Johnson thought less about it, and began to join the students, as formerly, in their amusements; the former of our tourists looking forward with some excitement to a masked ball which was advertised to take place, *par extraordinaire*, at the Pantheon theatre—the playhouse which, with the Luxembourg rendezvous for the admirers of the very minor drama ("chez Bobinot"), forms the chief resort of the students and *grisettes* inhabiting the Quartier Latin.

As soon as the day was announced, Mr. Ledbury's inquietude respecting what sort of a dress he should appear in gradually rose to a

degree the most unsettled and perplexing. Aimée, who of course was to form one of the party, had long ago settled up her mind to go as a *débardeur*, such being the proper and appointed costume for *grisettes* under such circumstances; Johnson had also determined to accompany her as a postillion; so that Ledbury was the only undecided one of the *trio* as to his character, and, in company with the others, he routed over the stores of every *Magazin des costumes* within a radius of one mile from the heart of the Quartier Latin.

"Here's a magnificent *moyen âge* dress," said Jack Johnson, as they stood inspecting the gay contents of a wardrobe in the Rue de Seine. "Look at it—'a page of the thirteenth century.' You would look very great in that."

But Mr. Ledbury had not a pleasant idea of his own appearance in feathers, flesh-coloured tights, and spectacles; and so he turned over the page for another.

"I think I should like to go as a Chinese," he meekly observed.

"Pshaw!" replied Jack, "what can you do as a Chinese? You couldn't *galoppe* in that spangled bed-furniture. You had better choose a *débardeur*, after all. It's a good dress—cheap and stylish, as they say of a ten-shilling Tagliani."

And so Mr. Ledbury, acting upon his friend's advice, and moreover assured that he would create a great sensation, agreed to go as a *débardeur*.

The dresses were sent home on the morning of the day, and Mr. Ledbury amused himself until evening by comparing them one with another, and disputing which was the most becoming, which dispute ultimately ended in his deciding that his own was. Although the performances at the theatre did not conclude until a late hour, and the ball was not to commence until twelve, yet our friends were dressed and all ready by half-past eight—Aimée having been politely accommodated with a dressing-room by a young *repasseuse* in one of the *mansardes* over their chamber. And when their toilets were all finished, and they sat down to coffee in Ledbury's room, there were certainly not three lighter hearts in all Paris—perhaps not in all the world. Aimée appeared to have derived additional attraction from her piquant costume, Jack Johnson was rollicking about, and singing snatches of twenty different songs as he rode steeple-chases on the chairs, to the great dislocation of their joints, and the bewilderment of the lodgers underneath, or occasionally, in the joyousness of his heart, threw his wig at Ledbury, covering him with a cloud of powder. And Mr. Ledbury himself, not yet exactly understanding where he was in his new attire, but withal immensely pleased with it, was only wishing that some of the young ladies he had met at parties in London could see him now; wouldn't they be glad to dance with him?—that was all!—and how all the other young men at Islington would sink into insignificance by his side!

Precisely at midnight they started for the ball. They had but a few yards to go from their door, and it was a fine night; so they walked in their dresses very quietly down the street to the theatre—a proceeding which did not create any curiosity in the Quartier

Latin. There was a great crowd of visitors at the doors ; but as only the ladies wore masks, they recognised several of their friends, including Jules and Henri, who came out uncommonly gay as two hussars. And although the *salle* is small, yet, when Mr. Ledbury was fairly in the theatre, the lights, the music, the dresses, and, above all, the lively and happy crowd around him, formed in their *ensemble* such a very enchanting scene that he began to think the accounts of the festivities in the Arabian Night were not the enormous lies he had always considered them to be.

"Gard' les jambes !" cried a man, running along the room, holding a tin can of water with a hole in it, with which he appeared to be flourishing hieroglyphics on the floor.

"What's he doing, Jack ?" asked Ledbury.

"Aux places ! messieurs et dames, s'il vous plaît !" exclaimed the master of the ceremonies, causing a sensation which precluded an answer to the inquiry.

"Un vis-à-vis !" shouted twenty voices at once.

"Go and ask that little girl in the lancer's dress to dance ?" said Johnson to Ledbury.

"But she don't know me Jack," was the reply. "Shouldn't I be introduced ?"

"Fiddlesticks !" returned Johnson : "go and ask her I tell you, and then come and stand opposite me."

Mr. Ledbury mustered up courage, and contrived to make himself understood. He returned with the *grisette*, and placed himself opposite to Johnson ; the band played a few bars of the opening quadrille, and the various sets fell into their places.

"The dance proceeded, enlivened in the orchestral department by a glorious *cornet-à-piston* ; and after the last figure such a *galoppe* took place that Ledbury soon saw the use of the man with the water-pot in laying the dust. He was not very successful at the *galoppe* ; but his partner was, so that it was of no great consequence. She bounded off with him the instant the air began ; and, what with running very fast, leaping, sliding, and taking terrific strides, he was enabled to keep up with her. To be sure, he tumbled down now and then, and got run over by twenty couple or so ; but this was of no importance, for everybody was too much absorbed in their own whirl to look after anybody else ; especially Jack Johnson and Aimée, who appeared to have taken an entire leave of their senses. And what a stirring chase it was ! Down the declivity of the stage as hard as they could tear, to the boarded pit, and then flying wildly round underneath the boxes, and up again to the back of the theatre ! It was indeed a *galoppe d'enfer*, as Aimée called it, especially to the inspired "Postillion," with the accompaniment of the crack of the whip, and jangling of the diligence bells. Then came the *Danois galoppe* and the *Fille du Danube*, and the *galoppe* from *Alma*, and a dozen others equally spirited ; and waltzes by Labitsky, Lanner, and Strauss, without end ; until the very hours took it into their heads to *galoppe* too, and the night passed away long before Ledbury, Johnson, or Aimée, perceived or wishe d it.

At the close of one of the dances Mr. Ledbury was sitting by his partner, endeavouring to wash down some of the dust with which they were choked with *limonade gazeuse*, when Johnson came up to him, apparently rather excited, and said—

“I have just heard something worth knowing. The *gendarme* you see keeping order at the corner of the stage was at the river the night Derval was murdered. He has recognised you and me.”

“Well, what then?” asked Ledbury, in great fear, imagining that they were both going to be immediately guillotined, in consequence, on the spot.

“He says that the assassin is to be executed this morning. It is not generally known yet; but if we like, as we were concerned in the affair, he can take us into the prison. Will you go?”

“I do not think I should like to see it, Jack,” replied Ledbury.

“Nonsense! man, you need not see the execution. Come along; we must get these things off, and meet the *gendarme* outside the theatre, in twenty minutes. It is now nearly six.”

Half entreated, half persuaded into going, our friends left the house, and hurriedly changing their things, returned to the theatre, where the officer was waiting for them. There were several cabs and coaches for hire at the doors; getting into a *citadine*, therefore, they drove immediately to the prison—a sudden and impressive contrast to the scene of revelry which they had just quitted!

On arriving at the prison, they remained at the door a short time, while the *gendarme* entered to obtain permission to bring them in. He returned almost directly, and motioning them to follow him, at the same time that he ordered the vehicle to wait, led the way through many passages, gloomy in the dull light of the morning, to the prison parlour. Several people were here assembled, and in the centre of them stood the criminal. Johnson directly recognised him, and pointed him out to Ledbury, who, perfectly overcome with terror, scarcely dared to breathe. A venerable abbé was at his side offering him the last consolations of religion, which the condemned man appeared to receive with respect, and even gratitude. He took off a heavy gold ring, such as the gipsies wear, and gave it to the priest, requesting it might be forwarded to some female whose name he mentioned.

“She will know shortly,” he said, “that she need not call to see me to-morrow.”

Ledbury thought it strange that there should be a female who could care for this blood-stained, fearful man!

The persons whose duty it is to attend the culprit now came into the room, and having removed some of his upper garments, and laid bare his neck, proceeded to cut off his hair. As the coarse, dark locks fell on the ground, he picked up one and gave it to the abbé, requesting that it might be forwarded with the ring. His demeanour was altogether calm and unmoved. Once only he shuddered, and that was when, upon looking down, he saw the collar of his shirt upon the ground, which had been cut off by the executioner. He moved it with his foot out of sight, and became as tranquil as before.

A short time was spent in the necessary arrangements, and then the *gendarme*, approaching Johnson, told him if he wished to witness the execution he had better start immediately for the spot in some vehicle, as the *cortège*, was about to leave the prison, and they would go at a rapid pace. A strange impulse now drew Ledbury on to see the end of the tragedy, in spite of its revolting nature; and hastening out of the prison, they re-entered the *citadine* and drove to the barrier.

It was now about twenty minutes to eight, and the inhabitants of Paris, being an early people, were quite alive and busy at that hour; but as the time and place of the fatal operation of the guillotine are always kept secret, Johnson and Ledbury did not see that tide of spectators pressing towards the spot that they would have observed in England until they arrived at the Val de Grace. Here several were evidently bending their steps in that direction, for in the immediate neighbourhood the elevation of the scaffold is a sufficient signal of what is to follow. When they came to the Place St. Jacques, at the Barrière d'Arcueil, in the centre of which the guillotine was erected, a great crowd of spectators had assembled, forming a large semicircle, commencing from the barrier on either side. They were chiefly of the lower orders, but several respectable females were amongst them; and two or three decent carriages were drawn up outside the ring and under the trees of the inner boulevards, filled with people. Of course all the windows commanding a glimpse of the area were fully occupied; and Ledbury was astonished to see two or three young girls, some of them evidently belonging to a superior sphere of life, anxiously gazing at the fearful preparations for bloodshed. The mob was certainly amusing itself in a most hilarious manner. Itinerant vendors of cakes and *marchands de coco* were perambulating amongst them; and a stranger would have thought, from their demeanour, that they were waiting during the *entr'acte* of an exhibition of mountebanks.

The guillotine was erected on a platform about seven feet from the ground, resting upon an open framework of timber, all of which was painted red. By the side of the plank on which the criminal was to be confined was a long basket filled with sawdust; and the box for the reception of the head was strapped to the uprights between which the knife was to fall. On one side of the scaffold was a common market cart, in which two men were calmly sitting, and smoking their pipes—this was to convey the body away; and on the other was a light waggon to carry off the scaffold itself when taken to pieces after the execution. The circle of spectators was preserved by municipal guards and mounted troops of the line, stationed in pairs at short distances; and the *gendarmes* were conversing in small groups in the centre.

A little before eight a cloud of dust at the extremity of the Boulevard d'Enfer proclaimed the approach of the cavalcade—a circumstance which seemed to be hailed with much glee by the mob. A large detachment of horse soldiers came first, at a sharp trot; then some of the city functionaries, in a small four-wheeled fly with one horse; and

lastly the criminal van, in which were the prisoner, the abbé, and the executioner. The van opened behind, and was consequently backed against the steps of the guillotine.

The priest first alighted, after him the condemned, and then the executioner. The culprit still preserved his firmness, his complexion denoted no internal emotion; and yet the solemn silence reigning around him, which was now but faintly disturbed by the shuddering of the multitude—a minute before so heedless—appeared nevertheless to produce upon him at that awful moment a lively impression. Looking steadily at the knife, which, heavily weighted, and fixed at the top of the uprights, was now throwing back the beams of the morning sun, he ascended the steps, listening to the last exhortations of the abbé. On reaching the platform, he shook his head, as if he wished to address the crowd; but merely exclaiming, “Oh! Dieu!” between his teeth, he took his place upon the plank, which was immediately lifted up, and pushed horizontally under the knife. A piece of wood, having a notch to correspond to the neck of the culprit, was then pushed down to prevent him drawing back his head; and as he was lying upon his face, he was actually looking into the box wherein his head was to fall.

All was now still as death; and, the catch being loosened, the knife fell swiftly down the groove; but the momentary check, as it cut through the vertebræ of the neck, could distinctly be perceived. Two immense jets of blood immediately spouted out from the divided arteries; but in an instant the body was pushed over into the basket, as well as the box containing the head. The scaffold was then washed down with pailfuls of water, and the crimson stream poured down in torrents upon the pavement of the road; next to this, the basket containing the body and head was placed in the cart, which drove quickly off; and then the crowd gradually dispersed, apparently much gratified with the spectacle they had witnessed.

In the evening Johnson and Ledbury visited the barrier again. All the apparatus was removed, and the ever-gay population of Paris was passing outside the gates, to enjoy themselves at the *quinquettes*. But the stain of blood was still upon the road, and the hearts of our friends sickened at the recollection of the morning's tragedy.

“I have seen a great deal,” said Ledbury, “since I left home, and shall not readily forget all I have witnessed; but I do not care to stay in Paris any longer. The winter is coming on, and I shall not be sorry to be once more at home again in England.”

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE JOURNEY HOME.

ENGLAND!—there is a sturdy look about the very word—a kind of touch-me-if-you-dare expression, which almost forces you to imagine that a few hardy letters of the alphabet had combined together to make a stand against any idle meddlers who wished to disturb their order. The word is a symbol of the nation, and the unflinching letters are emblems of the people who compose it.

A fine bracing wind was rollicking about the Nore, tumbling the waves over each other in reckless jollity, or blowing them off in clouds of spray, and rattling amidst the sails and cordage of the vessel, as the *City of Boulogne*, with all her steam on and her sails set, entered the mouth of the Thames, bearing her cargo of foreign importations and homeward-bound travellers. A glow of happy excitement was upon every face; and as the banks of the river came nearer and nearer on every side, and the little villages and church spires appeared, one after another, upon the shore, there arose ten thousand old associations, and thoughts of Christmas and its revelry, and all those loved ones who made home *home*—whose dear voices had not fallen upon the ear for so long a time, although their images had ever been present to the heart. The very water seemed endowed with life and feeling, and leaped and danced so merrily round the prow, and sparkled so joyously in the bright sunbeams as it was thrown back again to its parent deep in laughing foam, that every drop appeared a messenger of greeting and affection to welcome the wanderers home.

“Round the Foreland” is at all seasons a passage of extreme uneasiness to voyagers of delicate fibre and nervous temperament; but when the packet arrived in the comparatively still water of the river, the passengers became somewhat reassured, and one by one appeared upon deck. Mr. Ledbury and Jack Johnson were amongst the number; for, having seen all that they considered worth observing in Paris, and, moreover, discovering that the treasury was commencing to run rather low, they were now returning to London. And, indeed, Mr. Ledbury was anxious to eat his Christmas-dinner at home, and drink his elder wine “on his own hearth,” as he expressed himself (which Jack Johnson defined as meaning inside the fender, amongst the fire-irons), so that their proceedings had at last been somewhat hurried. Had they been less so, we might have related how they gave a farewell party in their old rooms to their old companions; how Aimée, Jules, and Henri, came to the office of the “Aigle,” in the Place de la Bourse, to see them off; how Aimée was very sorrowful indeed at parting with them; and how Jules consoled her with a two-franc dinner at the Palais Royal after they had gone; how Aimée sought further consolation by going as a ballet-girl into the

corps of the Académie Royale the next week ; and, finally, how Mr. Ledbury felt one pang, and one only, at returning, which arose from his not having been able to achieve a pair of moustachios during his stay, which would have rendered him so distinguished when he walked through Islington on the first Sunday after his return. We would have related all these things at length, and many more besides, but we wished to follow the adventures of our hero as closely as time would allow ; and all this would have taken up so much space that we should have experienced some little difficulty in coming up with him again. So the reader must please to imagine these events in any fashion most congenial to his own fancy ; and having, in company with the two travellers, given a long good-bye to Paris, we will all meet again, Ledbury, Johnson, the reader, and ourself, on board the steam-boat which is now conveying them up the river on their return voyage.

Jack Johnson who appeared endowed with a singular propensity always to sit on out-of-the-way and uncomfortable situations, had perched himself on the top of a pile of luggage, and was now, in company with Ledbury, making out the various localities as they appeared on the edge of the river.

"There's old Gravesend !" cried Jack, as he recognised the piers of what the guide-books call "this agreeable place of salubrious recreation."

"And there's Rosherville ! further on," continued Ledbury. "I say, Jack, the dancing there won't go down after the Chaumière—will it ?"

"Not exactly," replied Jack. "Wouldn't Aimée's waltzing make Mr. Baron Nathan stare?—wouldn't it put him on his mettle?—and wouldn't he try to cut her out in his Egg-shell and Tea-service Crackovienne or his Chinese Fandango in scale-armour and hand-cuffs ?"

"Purfleet," observed Mr. Ledbury, as they proceeded, "is stated by the guides to be a quiet resort for invalids unwilling to encounter the bustle of a large watering-place. There is sufficient gunpowder in the stores to produce an effect as far as London, if it exploded."

"I have read so in the 'Penny Handbook for Travellers, and Coast Companion,'" said Johnson. "I suppose that accounts for the rapid communication with all parts of Kent which Purfleet enjoys, according to the same authority."

"How very like old acquaintances all the names and signs look along the edge of the river !" remarked Ledbury.

"Very," returned Johnson : "and what a time it is since we have seen 'BARCLAY AND Co.'S ENTIRE' painted up ! It beats the *Commerce des Vins*, that we have left, all to nothing. But, however, we must not abuse Paris, now we have come away from it."

"Certainly not," returned Ledbury. "I was very happy there, and saw quite enough to think about all my life afterwards. I wonder how they are all getting on."

This led their conversation back again to France, and they soon lost themselves in a chain of "don't you recollects ?" which called up

all their bygone adventures. But we will do them the justice to say that, when they looked round and saw their own fine river, the mighty evidences of wealth and defiance that rode so proudly on its surface, and the tokens of commerce and enterprise that were crowded upon its banks, they agreed that old Thames took a deal of beating, and was a sight not to be despised after all. And so, likewise, thought a great many of their foreign fellow-passengers, who, clustering round the fore-part of the vessel, and presenting all those eccentric varieties of caps and cloaks which migratory continentalists love to indulge in, were uttering continuous expressions of admiration at the traffic of the river, and the "*mouvement perpetuel*" of the ships and steam-boats.

At last the packet came alongside the wharf; and, after much pulling and hauling, and many people being requested to stand out of the way, and more being thrust violently into side-cabins, and artfully-contrived kitchens and cupboards in the paddle-boxes, where they remained in great trepidation and compulsory confinement for an indefinite period—to say nothing of the anxiety of anybody to turn all the luggage topsy-turvy until their own effects were uppermost, and their acute mental agony at the chance of the Custom House officers seizing the bottle of brandy which they had brought from Boulogne with the cork out. After all this, the passengers were permitted to land between two rows of awe-inspiring men, who looked suspiciously at everybody, as if they were constructions of gloves, lace, cognac, and jewellery, in the form of men and women. Mr. Ledbury walked ashore with two bottles of eau de Cologne tucked into each of his boots, a packet of gloves in his hat, and Galignani's edition of Byron very boldly carried under his arm; whilst Jack Johnson had so stuffed every available corner of his wardrobe with *tabac de régie* that he looked like a locomotive pincushion, and, upon emergency, would have made an excellent "fender" to let down with a rope over the side of the boat, and keep her from any damage by concussion against the landing-place!

"There's a pretty girl, Leddy!" exclaimed Johnson, as they gained the shore, and looked up at the people who were on the platform of the wharf. "I think she knows us."

"It's my sister," cried Ledbury, immediately falling into a continuous convulsion of nods and smiles; "and there is the *mater* with her! Come along, Jack!—I do want to see them so much!"

And, hurrying up the inclined boards of the floating barge, which looked like the ribbed planks laid down for the horses in equestrian dramas, Mr. Ledbury pulled Jack Johnson after him, and soon reached the spot where his mother and sister stood, amidst a crowd of loiterers, who were shaking their handkerchiefs at the vessel, as if they were dusting it at a distance, or telegraphing to those of their friends who still remained on board.

"My mother—Mr. Johnson!" cried Ledbury, in breathless haste, as he introduced his friend. "Jack—my sister! How d'ye do?—and how are they all? How's the governor? You got the letter, then, all right? I thought you would come down."

And here Mr. Ledbury kissed his mother, who apparently expected he would do so, by putting up her veil the minute she saw him land, and next he saluted his sister in the same manner; and then the two ladies bowed to Jack Johnson, and Jack bent his head, and inwardly agreed that he should not have minded kissing the old lady at all, she looked so kind; and was certain that he should even have been delighted to pay the same compliment to the young one. For, though he had been flirting sadly amongst the *belles* of Paris, he was not too obstinate to allow that the bright eyes, and clear rosy cheeks, and cherry lips, of our dear English girls had in them something rather attractive than otherwise, even to travellers like himself.

"We are much indebted to you, sir," said Mrs. Ledbury, turning to Jack, "for the attention you have shown to Titus;" for such was Mr. Ledbury's Christian name—we believe the first time the reader has been put in possession of the fact. "I hope, now you are returned, that we shall see something of you at Islington."

"I will do myself the pleasure of calling, if not intruding," replied Jack, who would have made a magnificent bow, only he was afraid some of the tobacco would tumble out of his hat.

"You are not quite a stranger to us, Mr. Johnson," said Miss Ledbury. "We have heard so much of you and your achievements from my brother that we almost know you intimately already!"

"I fear he has told you little to my credit," said Jack, smiling, and feeling as if he was blushing, which made him do so in earnest.

"Oh, indeed," returned the young lady, "we are very happy to make your acquaintance. Your care of my brother will ensure you a welcome."

Mr. Ledbury here informed his mother that as no other foreign boat had come in that day, there was a chance of getting their luggage through the custom-house that same afternoon, and that, therefore, he intended to wait. Whereupon, Jack Johnson offered his services to procure a cab for the ladies; and, after a great deal of rushing about in the mud of Thames Street, and several narrow escapes from being crushed to death between walls and waggon-wheels, he brought a chariot in triumph down to the wharf. Mrs. and Miss Ledbury then left, after many mutual courtesies and pleasant speeches and charges to Titus to come up home directly his effects were cleared, and hopes that Jack Johnson would not be long before he came to see them.

As soon as they had departed, Jack turned to Ledbury, and, with a countenance beaming with enthusiasm, exclaimed—

"The happy moment has at length arrived which I have long anticipated."

"I am very rejoiced to hear it," replied Mr. Ledbury, "if it gives you any satisfaction. What is the cause of your joy?"

"It is four calender months," answered Johnson, "since these lips have known the taste of half-and-half; but we are once more in England, the land of the brave and the free, and the bar to my happiness has given place to the bar of the nearest tavern—away!"

Jack Johnson here assumed the tone and bearing of a melodramatic performer at a minor theatre in the last act; and, pointing with his

forefinger towards a retail establishment, in the attitude of those energetic gentlemen who figure in shop windows, at one penny plain and twopence coloured, he entered the shop, followed by Ledbury.

"Give me the goblet!" exclaimed Johnson, in the same theatrical tone, as he saw the barmaid was rather overdone by customers, at the same time seizing the pewter pot—"give me the goblet! The man who would not assist a female in distress is unworthy of the name of Briton!"

And, applying himself vigorously to the handle of the beer-engine, he filled a quart of the looked-for beverage, and then buried his features in its foaming head.

"Ah!" he added, after a long pull at the contents, as he stopped for mere want of breath, and passed the tankard to Ledbury, "*vin ordinaire*, at twelve sous a bottle, is very good; but if the French had cultivated hop-grounds instead of vineyards, we should have had much more trouble in thrashing them at Waterloo! It would have come to the same thing in the end, but would have taken longer time and stronger power to accomplish."

Their luggage was cleared that afternoon, nothing particularly contraband attracting the custom-house officers. The only things they looked suspiciously at were six or seven pairs of new boots, which Jack Johnson had given a little boy at Boulogne half a franc to wear, one after another, and run about in the mud all day, to make them look old. But Jack contrived, by dint of equal exhibitions of chaff and persuasion to get them passed; and, then, for the first time since they left England, the two friends parted; Mr. Ledbury flying to the bosom of his family at Islington in a patent cab, and Jack Johnson leaving his packages until he sent a man for them with a truck.

"It seems odd, old fellow," said Jack, as they shook hands, "to say good-bye, after having been so long together. However, Leddy, I shall come up and see you before the week is out. Who knows but we may have many more adventures yet? So keep your powder dry upon the strength of it."

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CHAPTER XIII.

A FEW PARTICULARS CONCERNING MR. LEDBURY'S FAMILY.

It was some little time before the domestic circle of which Mr. Ledbury formed an arc had quite recovered from the excitement consequent upon his return; or ceased to listen, with astonished eyes and ears, to his entertaining narratives of what he had witnessed abroad.

His relatives were rather proud of his adventures, and looked upon him as a traveller of no ordinary enterprise. Indeed, on the first Sunday after his return, when the period arrived that he had looked

forward to so eagerly, and he walked down High Street, in the afternoon, dressed in a complete suit of Parisian clothes, he almost occasioned a dispute. For the juvenile portion of his family were so anxious to secure his arm, that they came to a downright struggle, in their desire to show the natives in the district—most of whom, it is believed, being a domestic and ambitious people, look upon France with the same indefinite notions of its customs and position as if it were Nova Scotia or the Punjab—how very intimate they were, and upon what familiar terms they stood, with so celebrated a voyager.

Mr. Ledbury had the honour of being at the head of his brothers and sisters: Emma came next to him, in point of seniority; and then there were three or four miniature Ledburys, of various ages and sizes, who peopled the upper part of the house during the week, and were allowed on Sunday to dine in the parlour, and pledge their parents in doll's wine-glasses of fifteenpenny Cape, provided always that the nurse furnished a creditable report of their behaviour in the tub on the previous evening, which was sometimes exceedingly reckless and uncontrollable.

Master Walter Ledbury, an urchin of five years old, was a perfect infantile revolutionist: a sad little boy indeed, whom no domestic severity could intimidate. He had been known to make faces at the nurse, and tell her that she was too ugly for him to mind. And his perseverance in catching that most hapless of all tormented animals, the nursery kitten, was as remarkable as it was eventually successful—only equalled by the rapidity with which he dressed it in the doll's night-gown, whilst Foster had gone down to the kitchen for some hot water; and then, with the assistance of his senior sister, Ellen, gave it several successive dips in the tin bath, after the manner of the women they had seen at Margate. None of the dolls themselves ever escaped this ordeal, or retained their eyes five minutes after he had got hold of them; and his intense love of cleanliness induced him to wash all the toys he could lay his hands upon, until their colours were reduced to one general neutral tint. He filled up all the key-holes with the monkeys who held the apples from the Noah's Ark; and was never so happy as when he was trying to swim the cocks and hens belonging to the same establishment in his milk and water; or clandestinely giving the baby Japhet and his wife, that the black paint might be sucked off their round hats, and the infants upper lip ornamented with chocolate mustachios from their gaberlines.

Perhaps, if any one person in the family could manage the juvenile insurgents better than another, it was Emma Ledbury. In the event of a nursery *émeute*, she was always the peace-maker. And a sweet, gentle girl she was, too—as pretty as she was good, and as clever as she was pretty. She knew how to make all sorts of useful things, not trashy fiddle-fuddle fancy-work, but really serviceable domestic contrivances. Not but that she could very readily have embroidered a Berlin-wool chair-cover, or made a perforated card sticking-plaster case, if she had chosen to give her time to it; but she entertained a strange antediluvian opinion that the same proportion of industry, differently applied, might produce results of ten times greater utility

And she could have made a cloak for herself in the last and prettiest fashion in less time than the young lady who had lent her the pattern would take to finish an orientally-tinted Chinese cockatoo on an embossed fire-screen, or completed a set of nothing-holders for the mantel-piece—all straws, card-board, and blue ribbon.

Emma Ledbury was now seventeen; but she possessed more good sense and information than many young ladies of seven-and-twenty—if, indeed, young ladies will allow that there is such an age. She had not one attribute in common with our friend, her brother Titus, except his unvarying good-temper and kind-heartedness; nevertheless, they agreed remarkably well, and he entertained the highest notion of everything she did or advised. Her features were interesting and expressive; and, although not regularly perfect, far more attractive in their *ensemble* than those of the inanimate dolls to which the world so frequently assigns the epithet of “beautiful”—the originals of the lithographed divinities who stare or languish at us from the title-pages of songs in the windows of fancy stationers. Her eyes were dark and intelligent, and her soft glossy hair was braided over her smooth forehead, neither papered into cork-screws nor vulgarised into plaits.

Mr. Ledbury senior was the chief partner of a first-rate London house, the offices of which were situated in the centre of one of those intricate ramifications of bricks, mortar, and dirty windows, which are to be found in various corners of the city; and are approached by artful alleys and cleverly-concealed courts, known only to the tax-collectors, sweeps, and *employés* of the establishment. By dint of prudent economy, a few lucky speculations, and a very handsome share of the business, he had built up the edifice of his fortune bit by bit, and then perched himself comfortably on the top. But he still paid the same unwearied attention to the duties of his firm; more, however, now, from long habit than any real necessity which existed for such close application. The identical omnibus-ead who had ridden behind the vehicle ever since it first started, never shouted out “Now, sir!” as it drew up to the door. He knew Mr. Ledbury would be ready, or, if the conveyance was two minutes after its time, that he had walked on; and his return in the afternoon was so punctual that the neighbours regarded him as an animated chronometer, by which they arranged their clocks and watches. He had never been out of England, and very rarely out of London. He thought the neighbourhood of the Bank the only spot where a person could breathe a pure, wholesome air; and looked upon the country as a useful place for growing vegetables, nursing children, and feeding sheep, in order that they might supply the unequalled chops one of which he was in the habit of taking for lunch, direct from the gridiron, at a venerable sawdusted tavern, approached by a species of horizontal chimney, which perforated the lower part of one of the houses in a bustling thoroughfare.

A few days after our hero's return, he was one evening, as usual, giving a long account of what he had witnessed, and much more of what he had not, to his mother and sister; who, having completed a long debate upon the practicability of cutting down one of Emma's

dresses into a frock for little Ellen, were now making paper patterns of curious shapes and figures, which gave rise to much surmise in the mind of the spectator as to what portion of the dress they could possibly be intended for. Mr. Ledbury senior was reading the city article in the paper, occasionally indulging in a parenthetical commentary of a most uncomplimentary nature upon France and the French—regarding the latter as a species of educated apes, who did nothing but dance, eat nothing but frogs, manufactured nothing but sugar-plums, and whose general appearance resembled the foreigners he had seen in pantomimes and penny caricatures.

At length, Titus having come to the end of one adventure, and not being able, at the instant, to recollect or invent another, there was a pause of a few minutes in the conversation. Mrs. Ledbury looked at Emma with an expression of interrogation, and Emma telegraphed a nod of assent in return; and then Mr. Titus Ledbury elevated his eyebrows in inquiry as he gazed at his mother and sister, previously to nodding his head sideways towards the old gentleman; from all which gesture it appeared, taking these mysterious signals one with another, that some dark conspiracy was being formed in the family, of which Mr. Ledbury senior was entirely ignorant, although he was certainly intended for the victim. At last Mrs. Ledbury cut out a pattern in a desperate manner from the advertisement half of the day-before-yesterday's newspaper, and then, taking off her spectacles, folded them up gravely, and placed them upon the table, as, after a slight preparatory "Hem!" apparently to raise her courage, she said to her husband—

"My dear, we wish to consult you about a little affair we have in contemplation."

And then she looked at Emma and Mr. Ledbury (by whom we mean our friend the adventurer—he not being confounded with Mr. Ledbury senior), as much as to say "I wonder whether he will agree to it."

"Well, my love," replied the Ledbury *père*, "what is it?"

"We have been thinking," said Mrs. Ledbury, with hesitation, but endeavouring to make it appear a subject of mere commonplace interest, which she did not care about one way or the other—"we have been thinking that—we ought—that we ought, I say, to give an evening party."

"Um! I don't see the absolute necessity for such a proceeding," replied her husband.

"But why not, Mr. Ledbury?"

"Well, I don't exactly know," was the answer, "but there are fifty things against it."

"Perhaps you will mention one of the fifty, my dear," observed Mrs. Ledbury, looking significantly at Emma, and intending to express the words, "I think I have him there."

"Oh!" returned Mr. Ledbury senior, "it knocks the house about 80. Besides, our accommodations are not extensive enough. How can you cram a hundred people into our drawing rooms? You women think houses are made of indiarubber, that they will stretch to anything."

"My dear papa!" said Emma, "only look at last year; we had more than that number, and everybody was so much pleased, and so very comfortable!"

"Why, Emmy, what are you talking about?" exclaimed her father; "there was a perfect mob! Mrs. Hoddle never got further than the landing, and I was blockaded into the window-seat of the back drawing-room at ten o'clock; and couldn't get out until the first lot went down to supper."

"And yet they enjoyed themselves," observed Titus, mildly.

"Pshaw!" retorted the governor. "What possible enjoyment can people find in kicking their heels about at a time when they ought to be in bed and asleep?"

"Well, my love," said Mrs. Ledbury, softly, and trying to go upon another tack, "no doubt the young people think differently. Besides, we *must* keep our connection together."

"Very true, Mrs. Ledbury," answered the old gentlemen; "but your chief idea of connection is a parcel of people nobody cares anything about, who wear out the knockers, trouble the servants, wipe their skoes upon the carpets, cnt up the gravel before the door, and fill the card-basket. Yah! you never ask any of my real business connection."

"They are such very odd people, sir," said Titus, "who know nothing about Paris. It is so strange to visit them."

"You would find it much stranger if they were to turn their backs upon us," replied Mr. Ledbury senior. "Now, I don't mind dinner-parties; you may have one as often as you like."

"But, papa," said Emma, "we find so little amusement in your dinner-parties; and I am certain they are more expensive."

"And only entertain such a few people!" said Titus.

"And the wine they drink would make all the negus," added Mrs. Ledbury. "Besides, it need not be so good, if you put plenty of nutmeg; and see how the hot water and little custard-cups help it out."

Mr. Ledbury senior indulged in a faint groan of resignation.

"And they involve so much anxiety and awkward mistakes," continued Mrs. Ledbury, following up the attack. "At the very last dinner we gave Hipkins took round brandy sauce for the turbot, and kept back the oysters for the plum-pudding. Mrs. Claverly took some—of course—because we wanted her to have everything as good as it could be."

"And you will not learn the names of the dishes, my dear papa," said Emma. "When old Mrs. Hoddle asked for some of the *fondue* you sent Hipkins with the mashed potatoes!"

"If you have made up your minds to this discomfort," interrupted Mr. Ledbury senior, quite overcome, and wishing to raise the siege, "why, of course, it is no use endeavouring to make you think differently."

"Then you give us leave!" exclaimed all three of his companions at once.

"Well," said the old gentleman, with great deliberation—"well!—I give you leave: in fact, I must make a virtue of necessity. Only

don't tell me when it's going to be; or the mere anticipation will fidget me for a week beforehand."

"We'll keep it quite a secret, papa," said Emma.

"Or, upon second thoughts, I think you had better let me know," resumed Mr. Ledbury senior; "because then I will make arrangements to go out for the evening."

The point was gained, much to the satisfaction of the young people; and the family then relapsed into their own reflections. Mr. Ledbury junior began to calculate upon the effect his French scarf and boots would produce; and was almost sorry he had not got his *débardeur's* dress; Mrs. Ledbury had already laid out the supper in imagination; the old gentleman went back to his city article in the newspaper; and Emma was lost in a mental inquiry as to whether there was time for her to have her lilac *challis* dyed crimson, which, with short sleeves and *blonde* falls, would look very well and seasonable, considering the time of the year.



CHAPTER XIV.

JACK JOHNSON HAS AN INTERVIEW WITH A RELATIVE.

AMIDST the wilderness of houses that are crowded together between St. Giles's Church and Long Acre there is a labyrinth of streets which a man may spend his whole existence in threading, doubling, and running about, before he can determine in any degree whither they lead, how they are bounded, or in what aspect their various thoroughfares run. A confused mass of second-hand sale cellars, breweries, gin-shops, old-iron stores, potato-sheds, and eating-houses, whose windows display cooked meat of the most repulsive and coarsest kind, form the chief characteristics of the locality: and the inhabitants are equally squalid, smoke-dried, and poverty-stricken with their abodes. A polluted and steaming atmosphere, like a pall of clouds, laden with noisome fumes and dense vapours from the contiguous furnaces, hangs over these regions by day; and by night they are illumined by flaring jets of gas from the different sheds, casting their fitful and intermittent light over the cold fried fish, lumps of coal, and bundles of firewood there exposed for sale. The only signs of wealth in this dreary neighbourhood are found in the costly gin-shops—wealth, which is obtained by fiery aquafortis, that extracts the metal from the clods of earth which it destroys. Beneath the windows of these gaudy establishments, women, in their worst and most degraded nature, are collected, huddling together in little knots of two and three, all vociferously declaiming in the hoarse thickened accents of disease and intoxication, without cap or bonnet—a rough dirty shawl only pulled over their shoulders; and men of sinister aspect are loitering about the

corners of every court, leaning against posts, or quarrelling in a harsh and unintelligible language. Wretched children, too, swarm in every direction; but they are not like children. The countenances—even of the dirty and uncared for infants—betoken low and precocious cunning; and they creep along under the shade of the walls and buildings or crouch in low, narrow alleys, with the fear of light and publicity which early crime, coupled with the dread of its detection, has rendered habitual.

It was through this maze of want and depravity that Jack Johnson was following an ill-clad urchin, who appeared to act as his guide, on the very evening of his arrival in London. He had found a large collection of letters when he returned to his old lodgings that had arrived in his absence; and one amongst them, delivered only the day before, had led to his present journey. That it was important might be assumed from the hurry in which he started from home; and, as he carried the note with him to ascertain the address, he crumpled it in his hand with nervous anxiety, until it was almost illegible.

After traversing several streets, the boy at length stopped before a cellar, the mouth of which was garnished with several common theatrical properties, such as iron-combat-swords with basket-handles, scraps of worn and tarnished gold-lace, and patched russet-boots, all intended to captivate the eye, and ease the pocket, of some aspiring supernumerary, or hunter after this histrionic fame of a private theatre.

“Take care o’ yer head,” said the boy as they descended—a caution which was certainly necessary. “You’d best turn your face to the steps, and then you won’t fall.”

Acting upon his advice, Johnson turned round, and carefully watching each of his feet as he placed it on the rickety stair, lowered himself through the smoke that poured up the outlet in dense volumes, and at length found himself in a St. Giles’s cellar.

The miserable den into which he descended was about twelve feet square, and not above seven from the ground to the ceiling—if the bare joists and rafters deserved that name. There were two or three doorways that led into recesses still more limited and filthy, in which he could just discern, through the smoke which filled them, figures moving about in every direction. Walls, floor, ceiling, and fixtures were all of one uniform cloudy black; and the inmates partook of the same hue. The principal occupier of the front cellar was a cobbler, who was plying his calling at the bottom of the steps to benefit by the gas-light of the shop overhead; and various new-footed boots and shoes, at prices scarcely above the value of the old leather—vamped and polished to the last pitch of ingenuity—were ranged in such pairs as could be selected from them, on a ledge of rough board, amidst the theatrical properties before spoken of. The walls were covered with what had apparently been cheap caricatures, and execution bills, but now illegible, and almost invisible, from dirt. A wretched, featherless bird hopped from one perch to another, in a patched-up cage that depended from one of the rafters; and some melancholy rabbits were penned up in a corner of the room by an old

shutter ; whilst several helpless children—untaught as animals, without their cleanliness or instinct—were crying on the floor, or crawling through the doorways from one cellar to another. What the floor itself was made of it was impossible to distinguish ; but, from its irregularity, it appeared paved ; and in one part, where the drip from a leaky cistern-pipe kept it constantly moist, three or four seeds, which the bird had fluttered from his cage, had taken root in the dirt, and were struggling to push their two small dusky leaflets into existence. In the other rooms were some individuals—whether men or women it is difficult at first to determine, making shell-pincushions, halfpenny dancing-figures, dolls' saucepans, and other articles which may be daily seen selling for a small price in the streets ; and the whole range was pervaded by a stench of frying, smoking, and the fumes of gin, that was quite intolerable upon first entering.

It would seem that the inmates of the cellar had some idea upon what business their visitor had come. The proprietor looked rather suspiciously over his horn spectacles as he descended ; but when he saw clearly who it was, he laid down his work, and, turning a cat without either ears or tail, in a very unceremonious manner, from the chair on which it was seated, offered the accommodation thus procured to the new-comer.

"Thank you ; no," returned Johnson ; "I have merely come here upon a little business in consequence of this note. Do not let me disturb you."

"You ain't a blue lion," said a man who stood by, fixing an inquiring glance upon Johnson ; "nor a dragon ?"

"Indeed—no," replied the other, not having the most remote idea what these zoological terms implied. "I have to see someone here, it appears ; but you need not fear anything. Where is the person who sent this note ?"

The appearance of a well-dressed young man in the cellar had attracted the attention of the other inmates ; and they now forsook their different employments, and clustered about him, exclaiming—

"Here, sir !—this way !—I'll show you !"

And this was uttered with an eager anxiety that could only have been produced by a reward in perspective.

"Now, keep back ; there's good people !" said Johnson, as they crowded round him ; "one will be sufficient. You know what I have come about, and will direct me," he continued, addressing the cobbler.

The man immediately rose, and motioning the others to stand out of the way, with an air of temporary importance, derived from the choice made of his services, led Johnson through one of the doorways, and, passing a series of low, vaulted recesses, that looked like a *suite* of wine cellars without doors or bottles, stopped at one of the most remote. He here lifted aside a dirty patchwork curtain that was nailed before the entrance, and allowed the other to pass in.

On a miserable bed, which nearly occupied the entire space of the cellar, constructed of a dilapidated frame of packing-cloth, placed upon four oyster tubs, and covered only by a few old sacks, sewed roughly together, lay the writer of the epistle which had brought

Johnson to the present scene. He was a young man, about seven-and-twenty years old, apparently tall and well-featured; but his flesh was wasted, and his eyes sunk and preternaturally brilliant. A florid patch upon his cheeks, in striking contrast to his pale countenance, would have offered sufficient evidence of the relentless disease that revelled within with uncontrollable progress, even in the absence of the distressing cough, and quick, laboured respiration, which rendered any lengthened speech a matter of painful difficulty. He raised himself slowly up as Johnson entered; and, when the guide left them alone, held out his delicate hand, accompanied by a few faint words of recognition to his cousin—for such was the relationship between the two parties—as he approached. Seating himself on the bed, by the side of the other, Johnson took the wasted fingers in his grasp, and then looked at him for a minute, with a gaze of mingled surprise and sorrow, ere he exclaimed—

“Morris! what has happened that you have come to this?”

“I am afraid it’s all up!” replied the other, resting between every two words for a fresh inspiration. “I baulked them though, with all their vigilance: they have not caught me yet.”

“For God’s sake! tell me what you have been doing,” said Johnson, earnestly. “I thought I left you comfortably settled at the bank. You have been turned away?”

“No—no!” returned his cousin; I was not turned away—I left on my own account. They would be glad to see me again; but they won’t.”

“But this wretched den?—this miserable poverty-stricken——”

“Poverty!” interrupted Morris, with an attempt at a smile—“poverty; you are mistaken there.”

And, having looked suspiciously around, by the light of the dim candle that flickered in a clay candlestick at the head of the bed, he drew forth a small dirty cloth parcel from under the pillow, which he unpinned, and showed his cousin a number of sovereigns concealed in its folds. Johnson uttered an exclamation of surprise as he saw the gold.

“Hush!” exclaimed Morris, in a low voice—“hush! they don’t know of it—the people in the house: they would murder me to possess it if they did. Who could tell whether one of the inmates lived or died in this lonely cellar? I might lie here, and rot—rot like a cur, for aught the police knew. But the seclusion is my safety.”

“I see it all,” said Johnson, as the truth broke upon him. “You have embezzled the property of your employers, and have sought a refuge in this dreary place from their pursuit.”

“You have hit it Jack,” returned the other, with callous indifference; “I wanted money, and I took it. They stopped the notes; but I got some changed before the numbers were advertised. And they watched for me at all the ports, thinking I should go abroad, when I was close to them all the time!” And he attempted to laugh as he uttered these last words; but the endeavour was checked by a long fit of coughing, which sounded as if it was tearing his lungs to pieces. Johnson supported him in the bed during the paroxysm; but when it

was over, he fell back on the mass of rags which formed his pillow, perfectly exhausted.

"It's—it's only—a cold!" he articulated, after a short pause, as he saw Johnson watching him with a countenance of the deepest commiseration; "only a slight cold. I'm subject to it, you know; but I'm a great deal better—than I was."

"It is more than a cold, Morris," said Johnson, taking his hand. "I know enough of surgery to feel your pulse. See!" he continued, as he counted the time by his watch; "thirty in a quarter of a minute! A cold would not raise it to this."

"It is a cold, I tell you!" answered his cousin, apparently annoyed at having his word doubted. "I caught it in the wet streets, and out-buildings where I slept, almost out of doors, before I came here. I shall get better soon. I know it is only a cold."

"Well," continued Johnson, unwilling to contradict him, "I dare say it is. But now, Morris, of what service can I be to you? I do not see clearly what you would have me do."

"You must take care of that money for me Jack," answered the other.

"But it is plunder!" said Johnson. "I will return it, if you will give it to me."

"Return it! You have grown punctilious lately," remarked Morris, ironically.

"No, I have not, Morris," replied Johnson. "Careless, noisy, and—dissipated, if you choose to call it so, I may be; but I am not yet criminal. If you give me that money, I shall restore it to the people you took it from."

"And leave me to starve?"

"I do not think that is very likely. I have kicked down a great deal more of my income than perhaps I ought to have done in Paris during the last autumn; but I can, at least, keep you from starving."

"I shall not burden you long with any expense," continued Morris, still speaking in a half-satirical way, half-earnest tone. "If they find me they will hang me out of your way? or they will give up looking after me, and then I shall go. I don't know where; but I shall go away—perhaps a great distance off; for my cold will have got better then, and I shall be strong."

"You will give me the money, then?" said Johnson, endeavouring to lead up to a reply in the affirmative.

"If you will keep it for me—certainly," was the answer. "But if you are going to give it back, it shall remain here until they find it out;" and he pointed in the direction where some of the voices of the other inmates were audible. "They will murder me then, and be the only ones to enjoy it."

A few minutes of silence on either side succeeded to the last speech, broken only by Morris's harassing cough, which continued almost without intermission. At length Johnson was the first to speak, as follows:—

"Now, listen, Morris; if you will not let me have this money to return, let me keep it in charge for you. I need not say that it will

be sacred ; and what little you may require, until you think it advisable to leave this dreadful place, I will endeavour to supply you with."

"You have scarcely got enough to support yourself," replied the other, coldly ; "how can you afford to keep me?"

"We will not argue upon that score," returned Johnson ; "leave it to me, and I will do my best. Do you agree to this?"

Morris hesitated for an instant, and then replied—

"I can do nothing else. Here—take it, but keep it carefully. I know how much there is."

"You need not be in fear that I shall touch a doit," said Johnson, angrily. "Do you want anything else?"

"Yes ; leave me some silver, if you have it. I do not like trusting them with gold when they go out for me ; they would not bring it back."

Johnson immediately gave him what loose change he could spare ; and, in return, received the gold.

"I shall see you before long?" asked his cousin, as he rose to depart.

"You may depend upon my coming shortly," replied Johnson. "In the meanwhile, think over what I have suggested to you. Your secret rests with me ; and you will, I am sure, see the advantage of acting as I had advised, if you are not yet quite lost."

"You had better take the candle with you," observed Morris, heedlessly, pretending not to hear the last sentence. "They need not bring it back just yet. I am tired, and shall go to sleep. Good-night !"

And he turned round to his pillow as Johnson left him, wondering at the hardened indifference that allowed his cousin to sleep so readily under such circumstances, and in such a dismal chamber.

"How is the neighbour, docther?" asked a woman, in a strong Hibernian accent, as our friend regained the front cellar.

Johnson's tact enabled him directly to perceive in what light he was regarded by the inmates of the Cimmerian regions in which he was at present located ; and he directly returned some commonplace, but apparently professional, answer.

"It pours o' rain, master," observed the cobbler, who, having removed his stock from the entrance of the cellar, had pulled down the trap-door, given up work, and was enjoying a pipe by the hob of a very smoky fire. "It's a back'ards and for'ards, up-and-down sort of rain, as won't last long."

"I'll stay here for a few minutes, then, until it leaves off," said Johnson.

"Why don't you give the docther the seat?" exclaimed the Irish-woman, knocking a small boy off a stool, upon which he was perched, into the centre of a heap of rubbish, from which he did not reappear during the sojourn of the visitor.

As Johnson accepted the proffered accommodation, a sound arose from a corner of the room in a simultaneous burst of discordancy that directly drew his attention to the spot from whence it proceeded. A

row of dirty children, five or six in number, of ages varying from three to thirteen, were standing with their backs against the wall; and a man in front of them, with some piece of machinery fixed on the end of a pole, was apparently directing their vocal efforts.

"Hope you're well, sir!" said he, as Johnson approached, in a voice that had an equal dash of the knave and fool in it, but belonged completely to neither.

"Pray don't let me disturb you," replied Johnson. "I am curious to see what you are about."

"I'm a street professor, sir, of misery for the million. This, sir, is the model of a loom."

And pointing to the machine on the top of his staff, which looked something like the skeleton of a cabinet piano fixed to the end of a four-post bedstead, he pulled a string attached to it, whereby various bits of the apparatus were set in motion, shooting in and out, moving up and down, and performing various intricate evolutions, very curious to behold.

"This is the comb, there is the treadles, and that 'ere little thing's the shuttle. Now, the children looks at these, and when the treadles move they sing a hymn—just listen, sir."

And as he pulled the string, the children set up a miserable wail that would have been certain to have procured them a commission by purchase to some station in the next street.

At a signal they all stopped; and the man again addressed Johnson.

"Now, sir, you'll see how I guides them in the bits. Attention!"

Whereupon the children, directed apparently by the motions of the loom, commenced bawling at the top of their voices.

"We have not tasted food for three days (*pause*). Our mother died when we were infants (*pause*). Pity the distress of an industrious family."

"Now comes my solo," resumed the man, producing a rapid motion of every part of the loom at once, which checked the children's voices. He then continued, in a solemn measured tone, "My Christian friends, I am ashamed to be seen in such a situation. I am a native of Stockport, in Lancashire. I have been out of work for twelve months. The smallest sum will be gratefully acknowledged by an industrious family of small children. Then, sir," he continued, suddenly changing his voice, and addressing Johnson—"then, sir, we looks miserable; and if nobody comes to the windows, we starts the hymn again. That's sure to bring 'em out."

"And you find this answer?" asked Jack.

"Uncommon, sir," replied the man; "Only it's dry work teaching. P'rhaps yer honour would let us drink your health."

"There's a shilling for you," said Johnson; "it's all the change I have left."

"Thank'ee, sir!" returned the man. "I hope yer honour won't split, 'eos it's a profitable line, and it 'ud be a pity to have it spiled."

"Oh, no," answered Johnson, smiling, "you may depend upon my secrecy."

The cobbler here informed him that the rain had left off; so Johnson took advantage of the change, and saluting the inmates of the cellar, elambered up the steps, and thoughtfully retraced his way home.

And when he retired to bed, his rest was broken and unrefreshing, for he thought of his cousin, and the serious matter in which he himself was innocently involved; again picturing the wretched scene he had witnessed, and passing all the events of the day in wearying review through his brain, the only pleasant vision being the face of Emma Ledbury as he had seen her for the few minutes, whose sunny face and bright eyes ever and anon beamed through the dreary visions he had conjured up in his imagination.

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CHAPTER XV.

OF THE GRAND BALL GIVEN BY MR. LEDBURY'S FRIENDS TO CELEBRATE
HIS RETURN TO HIS NATIVE LAND.

As soon as the conspirators of the Ledbury family had gained their point, the guests were put down, and their invitations sent out—after much discussion as to who should have the French note-paper, who the lace-work envelopes, whose notes it would not do to stick a penny Queen's head upon, and whose could be sent by post, with a comparative rapidity beyond conception, for fear Mr. Ledbury senior should change his mind, and think that a dinner-party to eight or ten of his own peculiar friends would be better after all. The intervening time passed quickly by in planning, ordering, and canvassing different arrangements, and at length the eventful day arrived.

The early Islington cock had thrice crowed salutation to the morning fog, as the breakfast things were cleared away from the parlour, and the boy in waiting, who sported a calico jacket in the morning, and a firmament of buttons in the afternoon, rubbed the table with a highly-magnified small-tooth-comb-brush, to take out the light marks which the hot saucers had left behind. Old Ledbury, foreseeing a domestic tempest, took his departure for the city with unusual alacrity—indeed, he was ten minutes before the omnibus. Not that his business that morning was of extra importance, but he wanted to fly from the approaching confusion. And if he had not luckily possessed his counting-house as a place of refuge, he would have ridden backwards and forwards all day long from the Bank to Lisson Grove from mere dread of returning home. No sooner had he gone than the first note of preparation was sounded by Mrs. Ledbury calling for a candle,

and then, accompanied by Titus, plunging into the cellar to see how the *blanc-manges* and jelly looked—the latter of which delicacies had been strained through an inverted flannel fool's cap the night before—and to bring up the wine. The inspection proved satisfactory; and by the time Emma had filled all the pint decanters, some with sherry, and others with marsala (intended to pass muster in the confusion of supper), and Mrs. Ledbury had mislaid the keys four times, and Master Walter Ledbury had twice ventured down from the nursery, in the absence of Foster, and been twice violently carried back again, after pulling off two or three of the oranges which Titus had tied to some laurel-branches in a small conservatory on the first-floor landing—by the time all these things were accomplished, a cart stopped at the door, loaded with long spars of wood, striped canvas, and trestles, on the top of all of which was perched Jack Johnson. A crowd of little boys followed him, who, imagining it was a travelling exhibition, cheered vociferously as the vehicle stopped at the door, and redoubled their greetings when Mr. Ledbury appeared at the window and nodded to his friend.

In the short period that had elapsed since the tourists returned from France, Jack had called several times at Ledbury's house, and was now looked upon as the most intimate of their friends. This will account for his appearance at Islington so early on the day of the party—a time when people are generally not at home to anybody, except those actually engaged in the preparations for the evening's festivity. But now his services had actually been solicited by all the family, to assist them in constructing a temporary apartment. Mrs. Ledbury had originally intended to devote her own bedroom to the supper-tables; but bare hint of such a proceeding met with so decided a negative from Mr. Ledbury senior that she saw the plan must at once be abandoned—the old gentleman not entering into the ideas of fun and convenience which everybody else appeared to see in such a transformation. Then the nursery was talked about for the same purpose, and alike discarded, no domestic ingenuity being able to contrive another bivouac for the infantry therein abiding; and they were almost giving the whole affair up in despair, when Jack Johnson, who chanced to be present at one of the discussions, suggested to Titus the practicability of covering in the garden—which was a narrow slip between two walls—and thus procuring a very roomy apartment, to be entered from the French windows of the back drawing-room. The proposal was immediately decided upon; and Jack undertook to superintend the whole of the architectural proceedings, relying upon the co-operation of a friend—a gentleman in high-lows, who kept stables at the races, and who promised to procure the requisite poles and tarpaulins from certain of his connections in the Crown-and-Anchor line who provided canvas *salons* for the votaries of Terpsichore at various fairs and merrymakings about the country; and with this cargo, accompanied by the man, Jack now arrived.

A little confusion occurred in unloading the cart; but after Mrs. Ledbury had requested the man five separate times to rub his shoes as he went through the "hall"—a portion of the mansions of England

in the olden time, formerly known as the "passage"—and the little boys, still holding to the belief that a show was about to be erected (the more so as they saw a yellow balloon for illumination lamps come out of the cart), had boldly advanced to the very door, from which Mr. Ledbury gallantly drove them back with an umbrella;—after these little events the whole apparatus was safely collected in the garden. And then Jack Johnson, in company with his friend in the highlows, who was commonly known as "Spriggy Smithers," assisted by the baker's boy, who brought the rolls for the sandwiches, and was forcibly detained, and pressed into the service—all went to work together, and laboured so well that by one o'clock the whole of the framework was in order, when the baker's boy was sent home with a shilling and a tin of patties, and Jack and Spriggy, with that absence of all discomfort from difference of position attending true good breeding, refreshed themselves with a bottle of stout which Mrs. Ledbury sent out to them, and discussed some sandwiches, made from the unrepresentable terminations of the above-mentioned rolls and certain anomalous dabs of ham; but which were, nevertheless, very acceptable, and especially so to Jack, for Emma brought them herself. Titus, to be sure, was of no very great assistance as far as hard work went: but he stood upon a tub, and handed up the tacks and pincers when wanted, or entertained them with humorous anecdotes, and diverting snatches of melody, so that they were glad of his company; and Mrs. Ledbury was not sorry to get him out of the house, where, truth to tell, he was rather in the way, after all the decorating arrangements intrusted to his taste were finished. With this co-operation they covered in the tent with canvas, and then proceeded to arrange the tables underneath; feeling some comfort at being concealed from the gaze of the neighbours, for all the back windows of the contiguous houses had their full compliment of spectators, who were intently watching the construction. And when the supper itself began to appear, and the glass-cups had been filled with custard, Master Walter Ledbury, who had behaved with unparalleled propriety for two hours, never leaving the nursery, was allowed to come into the kitchen and clean the interior of the stew-pan after his own fashion, with a large piece of bread in his hand, and an enormous pinafore tied under his chin, until he made himself quite as poorly as the fondest and most indulgent parent could desire.

"My dears," said Mrs. Ledbury to Titus and Emma, who, under her direction, were writing the names of various delicious comestibles upon slips of paper, and placing them in the dishes intended for their reception; "my dears, you must endeavour when supper-time comes to put Mrs. Claverly as near the trifle-basket as you can. I particularly wish her to see it."

"I'll look out," replied Ledbury, writing "anchovy sand" on a piece of paper, and putting it in a small dish.

"And at the same time, get old Mrs. Huddle away from it, or she will be sure to be telling its history to all the table, and how much it cost; she was in the shop when I bought it."

"If you will give me a hint when the time arrives," said Jack, "I

will light up the balloon. It will come out uncommonly grand, if my plan answers."

"And pray, what clever contrivance have you got to astonish our guests with, Mr. Johnson?" asked Emma Ledbury.

"Why, you must not say anything," replied Jack, confidentially, "but I have hung the balloon to the bottle-jack, so that when I wind it up it will keep turning round."

And here everybody expressed their admiration at Jack's ingenious application of domestic machinery to the purposes of social enjoyment, and were astonished to see how very cleverly he had contrived to conceal the bottle-jacket in a large tassel of coloured paper, fringed at the edges.

"How it will puzzle the company to find out how it is done!" observed Mr. Ledbury.

"Now, don't go telling the people all about it, Titus," said Emma, "as you did last year, when Brown lent us the Chinese lamps out of the shop-windows to put in the conservatory."

"I shall be studiously secret on this point," replied her brother.

"The only thing that could betray it to a keen observer," said Jack Johnson, "is this: if any one listens attentively, he will hear a 'click' every half-minute, or so; and then it will turn the other way."

But they all agreed there was not much chance of this, for people at supper were usually occupied in assisting, or being assisted, and, as it was rather a noisy period of the evening's festivities, they were not very likely to detect the contrivance.

It was evening before the preparations were completed; and then Jack Johnson took his departure, with all sorts of expressions of gratitude from the family, promising to return as soon as his ball-toilet was made to his satisfaction. Mr. Ledbury vanished to his own room, where he laid all his French clothes in great state upon the bed, and then spent half an hour in admiring them; and Mrs. Ledbury and Emma contrived, about eight o'clock, to procure some coffee from the nursery tea-things—it not being thought advisable to disturb the order of the china service, which was awaiting the guests in the parlour. And the old gentleman had not returned from the city, but was presumed to be spending the evening in a retired tavern in the city—so quiet a place that the very clock appeared afraid to tick, and vibrated with a grave and subdued beat, which endowed it with an air of tranquil respectability, perfectly in accordance with the usual frequenters of the house.

Johnson had resolved, for this day and evening, at least, to cast all his care and troubles to the winds; and, true to his promise, returned to Ledbury's at an early hour. Indeed, Titus had not completed his toilet when his friend arrived, so Jack bounded upstairs to his room, and superintended the finish of his ball costume, eventually turning him round three times, as if he was playing at blindman's buff without the bandage, to see that everything was perfectly *comme il faut*. Then they descended to the drawing-room, where they found Emma Ledbury admiring a bouquet which was lying on the chelonnier; and her

admiration greatly increased when Jack stated that he had brought it in his hat on purpose for her ; and then she admired the beautiful flowers, and Jack invented an elegant compliment, something about her being a more exquisite flower than any of them ; and then Emma curtsied so prettily as she smiled at Jack's politeness, and Jack Johnson bowed gracefully in return ; and Titus, perceiving that his presence was not in any way necessary to the absolute happiness of either his sister or his friend, walked into the conservatory on the landing, and gave a last glance to see if his oranges were all right, previously to lighting one or two illumination-lamps which he had suspended to the laurel-branches. And when he had finished, he stepped back to admire his handiwork, and called Jack and Emma out to look at it, and say if it was not quite like a scene in the story of Aladdin. But Jack and Emma were having a turn or two in a waltz to their own music, just to see if their step was the same, which was proved to be so, to their entire satisfaction ; so Mr. Ledbury was compelled to be content with the encomiums of his mother, who came down just at that period and requested Emma would see that all the lamps and candles were properly lighted, because she thought she heard the sound of a fly in the lane.

Nor was she mistaken, for immediately afterwards there was a knock at the door ; and, after much mysterious shuffling about in the passage, and inquiries of the servant as to what time the carriages were ordered—for flies are always “carriages” at evening parties—the guests were ushered upstairs, preceded by the boy in buttons, who rushed up like a lamplighter, and announced, “Mr. and the Miss Simpsons.” Mr. Simpson was a young gentleman, with his hair curled, in a rich plaid satin stock, which he imagined to be very fashionable, having seen so many of that quiet, unobtrusive pattern in the shops of Islington. The Miss Simpsons were three tall figures, with red hair, who looked as if they had been cut out of Parian marble, and nourished upon writing-paper ; and, being thin withal, and dressed in light poplins, they prompted Jack Johnson to tell Emma Ledbury, very wickedly, that they put him in mind of animated sticks of self-lighting sealing-wax. Then the young ladies remarked what a beautiful day it had been, and asked Miss Ledbury if she had been out walking ; and Mr. Simpson inquired of Mr. Ledbury how he liked Paris, and whether there was anything in the papers.

Old Mrs. Hoddle, who lived a few doors off, next made her appearance, preceded to the gate by her maid with the lantern (although the entire distance was between two bright gas lamps), and having her head enveloped in some artful contrivance of green calico lined with pink about the size and fashion of the calico of Margate bathing-machine. The old lady was a long while coming upstairs, and would stop on the landing to look at the conservatory, which pleased Titus when he perceived that his ingenuity was already rewarded with one admirer ; and when she finally arrived at the drawing-room, she “would say this, that, amongst her friends, Mrs. Ledbury certainly did contrive to exhibit the greatest taste in her arrangements ;” and then, after the customary courtesies, she began a long story of how

dreadfully she and her maid had been frightened the night before by a strange cat, and one or two other appalling circumstances, which were cut short by the arrival of some more guests. Mrs. Hoddle was then inducted by Titus to a comfortable seat at the end of the room, where she remained until supper, greatly edified by the quadrilles, which she still called the new-fashioned way of dancing, and occasionally considerably terrified by the waltzers.

When the hour of invitation to an Islington evening party is stated to be nine o'clock, the guests have a curious custom of assembling within a short period of the exact specified time; and, accordingly, they now began to arrive pretty quickly; so much so that Titus saw, with honest pride, as he peeped through the blinds, at one time there were actually two cabs and a fly waiting to put down their inmates at the gate. And he felt the triumph the greater because his family were not exactly on the best of terms with the Grimleys, next door; and he only hoped that Mrs. Grimley was at the window to see what a large connection they had. Besides, he knew there were some private carriages to come—the Claverlys, at all events, never minded taking their horses out at night; and he was also uncharitable enough to imagine how uncomfortable Miss Grimley would feel as she lay in bed, and listened to the piano, through the wall, playing the various dances.

But if this trifling circumstance afforded Mr. Ledbury gratification, how much more was he delighted when he received the congratulations of all his friends, by turns, upon his safe return to England! And when the thrilling time came for him to commence the quadrille with one of the prettiest girls in the room, in all the glory of his Paris trousers and little French boots, with glazed toes, he thought all his past dangers were compensated by the power they thus endowed him with of being able to distinguish himself. And he did not feel awkward by the side of his partner, nor find a difficulty in entering into conversation, as he did when he first knew him, before he went abroad, but he indulged in a rapid succession of brilliant images and descriptions that almost astonished himself, but at the same time persuaded him of the wonderful efficacy of travelling in expanding the mind.

Jack Johnson danced opposite to him with Emma, and there were many telegraphic signals between them, or sly speeches when they chanced to meet in the quadrille. And now and then, when Jack caught Ledbury's eye, in the confusion of the figure, he introduced a quiet imitation of the *caneen*, quite between themselves, and understood by nobody else, which instantaneously gave birth to a new train of ideas, and *souvenirs* of their own party in the Rue St. Jacques, and Aimée, as her own pretty self, and as the *debardeur*, with recollections of Mr. Ledbury's *début* at Tonnelier's, when he could not waltz at all, and many other pleasant retrospections, which Titus was almost tempted to tell his partner about, thinking it would astonish her. And, in all probability, it would have done so very much.

The guests had all arrived, including the Claverlys, who *did* come in their own carriage, as Mr. Ledbury hoped they would; and one of

the young ladies who had brought their music, of extreme timidity, and with a faint soprano voice, was in the middle of favouring the company with the trumpet chorus at the commencement of "Norma," put to some highly vigorous and poetical English words about her cottage home, or her native land, or something of the kind, when a scuffle, accompanied by sounds of infantile anger, was heard on the stairs; and the door being thrust violently open, Master Walter Ledbury made his appearance, habited only in his night gown and cap, with the nurse's shawl partly dragged behind him, and partly wrapped round him, in a manner which led the spectators to believe he had made his own toilet. And his presence was scarcely noticed ere Foster rushed in after him, and exclaiming in mingled accents of distress and intimidation, "Oh! Master Walter—you naughty, naughty boy!" caught him up in her arms.

But Master Walter was not going to yield himself a prisoner without a struggle; and after vainly attempting to seize the light blue sarsnet ribands of Foster's cap, published quite new upon the occasion, he commenced a series of loud cries and struggling gymnastics, kicking his little fat legs about very wildly, in a reckless manner, that caused great confusion amongst a large part of the company. Nor did there at first appear a great chance of getting him back again; for the truth was that the young gentleman, having been wide awake all the evening with a restlessness induced, most probably, by indigestion, had listened to the music until he felt desirous of joining in the revelries; and, taking advantage of Foster's absence in the refreshment room had marched downstairs, to her great consternation.

"Now, my darling Watty!—there's a dear, good boy!—go upstairs so pretty and nice with Foster," said Mrs. Ledbury, overcome with confusion, and putting on her most winning look and accent.

"I shan't!" was the simple but energetic reply.

"Return to the nursery, sir!" cried Mr. Ledbury, in a voice that was absolutely terrific, and made his partner tremble.

"No, I won't," said Walter. "I don't care for you, and I don't care for Foster, and I don't care for mamma, and I don't care for nobody."

Nor did it appear as if he did, for even Emma's proverbial ascendancy over his actions entirely failed. And the usually potent threat of summoning the tall man in the cocked-hat and shirt-sleeves, who kept the bogies to eat little boys, was of no avail; so that at last, Titus, losing all command of his better feelings, and with a wrath he had never before shown, seized his brother wildly, and bore him off in a Rolla-like paroxysm, when the closing of the nursery-door shut out his very energetic cries. One or two of the guests had the curiosity to watch the retreating group; and these were also favoured with a momentary glimpse of Mr. Ledbury senior, who had arrived at home during this slight interruption to the gaieties of the night, and forthwith darted to his own bedroom with all the alacrity he could muster, never once showing his face amongst the guests all the evening, but regarding the whole assemblage as a society of harmless lunatics—

each, in the true spirit of the inmates of Bedlam, finding amusement in the others' antics.

The usual routine of evening-party amusements went on in the accustomed order, in the course of which Jack Johnson was, to use his own phrase, swindled into singing a sentimental song, which was an impropriety he could never have been guilty of had not Emma Ledbury played the accompaniment; and about a quarter-past twelve Mrs. Ledbury informed Titus, in great confidence, that she thought it was time the lamps in the supper-room were lighted, if Mr. Johnson would be kind enough to look after them. Whereupon Jack enlisted the boy in buttons into his service, and left the room, giving Miss Ledbury the hint to get up another quadrille, or "prevail upon some young lady to favour them with another of her delightful songs," just to carry on time—both of which Emma contrived to do; and, by the time they had finished, Jack had touched all the wicks with turpentine, lighted the lamps, and wound up the jack, which set the illuminated balloon revolving in a manner highly gratifying to behold.

In a short time, all being pronounced perfectly in order, the French window of the supper-room was thrown open, amidst the continuous expressions of lively admiration from the guests, and more especially from old Mrs. Hoddle, who, knowing the accommodations of the house, had been wondering all the evening whereabouts the supper would be, or whether they were to be put off with a few tarts, sandwiches, and cut oranges handed about the room. There was the customary confusion in providing seats for all the ladies; and several funny young gentlemen, who had ensconced themselves very comfortably next to their last partners for the sake of talking all sorts of delightful nonsense to them, and turning the whole meal into a *mélange* of fowls and flirting, creams and compliments, and lobster-salad and love-making, were summarily ejected by Jack Johnson as soon as he discovered there were ladies still without seats. Emma displayed considerable generalship in placing Mrs. Claverly exactly opposite the trifle; and Titus, in a most polite manner, offered his arm to old Mrs. Hoddle, and, engaging her in conversation, walked her quite down to the bottom of the table, where there was nothing for her to tell the price of to her neighbours. Nobody appeared to notice the absence of Mr. Ledbury senior, or if they did, nobody seemed to care about it; indeed, as two or three of the most presentable clerks in his office had been invited, the chances are that they were much more gratified to find he did not show upon the occasion.

After a space of about twenty minutes had elapsed, during which considerable havoc had been made amongst the delicacies of the table, Jack Johnson took a pink decanter in his hand, and rising from his seat exclaimed—

"Gentlemen, may I request you to see that the ladies have some wine in their glasses; and will you do me the favour to fill your own?"

Hereupon there was a little simultaneous bustle, every young gentleman seizing the nearest decanter, and every young lady, after about four drops had been poured into her glass, arresting the effusion

of a greater quantity with her hand, as she said, "That is quite sufficient, thank you."

"Ladies," continued Jack, laying much softness on the word, "and gentlemen: I have the permission of Mrs. Ledbury to propose a toast which I am sure will be received by all of you in the most enthusiastic manner; and more especially by the ladies, if I may judge from the kind expression of that nearer, dearer, clearer heaven of star that beams around me."

And here Jack gently pressed Emma Ledbury's foot under the table, and Emma, very much offended, drew her foot away; but, with her usual amiability, forgetting the affront altogether, allowed it to return to the same place the next instant.

"The individual whose health I am about to propose is known to all of you; and I am certain you will agree with me that to know him is to admire him."

"Hear, hear!" from the gentlemen, and especially from the presentable clerks.

"I have proved his good qualities beneath the skies of foreign lands," continued Jack, "and on the bounding ocean—that mighty monster, that lies coiled like a green serpent round about the world——"

"Beautiful" from several young ladies, including the Misses Simpson.

"And I can assure you that I am proud to call him my friend. I therefore will intrude upon your time no longer, but beg you will drink the health of Mr. Titus Ledbury, whose happy return we have met here to celebrate this evening: and—if you please—with the usual honours."

Great applause followed the conclusion of the speech, everybody looking towards our hero, and thumping the table; and as they all drank his health, a very close observer might have seen his eyes glisten under his spectacles; especially when Jack Johnson shook his hand warmly, and merely observed, "Leddy! old brick! here's your jolly good health!" in an undertone, but not the less warmly upon that account.

There was a general silence as Mr. Ledbury tremblingly poured out a glass of wine until it ran over, and rose from his seat. But scarcely had he uttered "Ladies and gentlemen"—scarcely did the majority of the guests know that he had commenced his speech, when there was a sudden and violent rent in the canvas of the ceiling—a leg forcibly protruded itself; and the same instant, to the horror and astonishment of the guests, a boy in buttons burst through the top of the temporary room, and fell down, all in a heap, upon the trifle, breaking the barley-sugar temple that enshrined it into ten thousand fragments, and scattering its contents far and wide, but more especially into the lap of Mrs. Claverly. At the same time he knocked an argand-lamp into the lap of one of the Miss Simpsons, and kicked a decanter of port over the dress of the other.

The wildest confusion followed the unexpected apparition. Many of the young ladies, who had eligible gentlemen near them, fainted

clean off. Old Mrs. Huddle was perfectly paralyzed. Mrs. Ledbury, as soon as her intellects returned, recollected there would be five-and-twenty shillings to pay for the broken trifle-dish; and Mrs. Claverly, whose emerald velvet was covered with trifle, remained a few minutes in speechless anger, and then, boldly asserting that people who gave evening parties ought to provide better accommodation, strode majestically from the room, and was never seen again. It was her final retirement from the Islington theatre; and a most dramatic exit she made.

Springing from their respective places—Jack Johnson like a tiger, and Ledbury like a mechanical frog—they seized the intruder, and dragged him from the table. In an instant the truth was apparent. The Grimleys next door, curious to have an account of the festivities from which they were excluded, had stationed their “page” on the garden-wall to watch the proceedings, and report accordingly. But the “page,” in the manner of his ancient pretty prototypes, anxious to “look out afar,” had climbed on to the roof to get a better view. As long as he kept upon the poles he was tolerably safe; but chancing to miss his hold, he had glided down a little, and the canvas not being strong enough to support him, allowed him to enter the supper-room in the unceremonious manner here described. The greater part of this was inference, for the boy was in such an extreme state of trepidation that he could not utter a word. So Jack Johnson committed him to the care of Ledbury’s boy in buttons, with directions that he should be immediately kicked back again by the front doors, with his kind regards to the family; and as, in a similar manner to ancient times, the feuds of the family were followed up amongst the retainers, the order was immediately executed in a most satisfactory manner.

Of course the ladies immediately left the table; and it was not until they had danced two sets of quadrilles by themselves that they recovered from the affright. The harsher sex, it is true, looked upon it as a glorious joke, and their reappearance set everything going again as merrily as before: more especially when Mrs. Ledbury and Emma agreed not to tell the old gentleman anything about it, but leave him to find it out. And so the evening passed, or rather the night, and part of the next morning, until Jack Johnson, who remained until the last, took his departure, promising to send Spriggy the next day to take down the things, with a recommendation for them to look after him. And Mrs. Ledbury, Titus, and Emma, having seen that all the plate was right, and not a great deal of glass broken or oil spilt on the carpet, blew out what remained of the wax candles, and retired to bed, each having comforted the other with the assertion “that they were sure everybody must have passed a very happy evening,” and delighted to think, with the exception of the accident, that everything had gone off so well.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN WHICH WE FIND JACK JOHNSON AT HOME.

NORTH STREET, Theobald's Road, is a colony not exactly within cry of the clubs, but withal a retired and perfectly respectable *locale*, supposed to have been originally found out by a gentleman too late for dinner, in the endeavour to discover a north-west passage from Bedford Row to Queen Square. The houses, as well as their occupants, are staid and solemn, wearing the air of a generation that has passed away; the window-frames are heavy, the glass dusky, and the sparrows have pecked away the mortar from all the bricks of the chimneys. Notwithstanding the seclusion, a variety of *al fresco* exhibitions constantly take place in the street to enliven the aborigines. Piano-organs love the neighbourhood; Punch here erects his four-post theatre, and screams and riots in undisturbed mischief; and the man who does the trick with the doll has been known to visit the thoroughfare; whilst to the feline sportsman it offers peculiar advantages, more cats appearing there at night, probably, than on any other spot in London—the streets running ∞ of the Strand alone excepted. It is not presumed that an evening party ever took place in North Street, beyond the mechanical one in front of an extensive musical instrument, which performed there one night, and represented several couples waltzing round and round, with a very polite little figure revolving by himself, who made several rapid and convulsive bows with his conical hat whenever he faced the spectators; and from this the inhabitants gleaned some ideas as to what an evening party was, thinking it singular, at the same time, that at regular intervals a troop of horse-soldiers came in at one door and out at the other, all across the ball-room; which proceeding had certainly a strange appearance, but, without doubt, was customary in high life.

The lodgings of Jack Johnson were in the above thoroughfare; and the morning had advanced to an hour half-way between the average time of breakfast and lunch in sober and well-conducted families ere he awoke, on the day subsequent to the party at Ledbury's. Upon retiring to bed, in the vanity of his heart, and the reliance upon his strength of mind, he had set the alarm of a small clock, which hung in his chamber, to go off at half-past eight; but when the time came, and the weight ran down in a most intoxicated manner, to the shrill clatter of its own bell, he was still wrapped in a deep slumber. Nor were his dreams disturbed either by the noise in the house, the perambulating euterpeon, in the streets (which always reminded one of many trumpets put into a coffee-mill), or the occasional information conveyed to him by the servant at the door, that each time she came it was half an hour after her last visit; and that the warm water had been changed three times, in consequence (to use the language of useful knowledge) of diminution of caloric caused by gradual evaporation.

At length he awoke ; and collecting an immense quantity of resolution, as soon as he understood clearly that he was in proper possession of his faculties, he proceeded to make his toilet, which he did pretty well, considering that he got through the greater part of the process with his eyes shut. But all the time he could not banish the vision of Emma Ledbury from his imagination ; and when he sat down to breakfast, he thought what an elysium his second-floor front would become if she were there to make coffee for him ! With her for a companion, how smoothly the current of his life would flow ! and how very pretty she looked last night !—with many wonders as to whether she cared for him, or merely regarded him as she did other friends of her brother ; and various other pleasant speculations which young gentlemen are apt to fall into after they have met attractive young ladies at evening parties. But, perhaps, all these reveries were the more singular in Jack Johnson because he had not often amused himself before this time with building matrimonial bowers in the air, or giving way to any other delicious absurdities of the same class.

He was trying to persuade himself that he really had an appetite for his breakfast—a custom usual with people after a festive evening—when the servant announced that a man wished to speak to him ; and as she appeared anxious not to leave him alone in the passage longer than was absolutely necessary, Johnson ordered him up. As he entered the room, our friend immediately recognised the professor of “misery for the million,” whom he had met in the cellar in Saint Giles’s.

“I’ve brought this bit of paper, doctor,” said the man, who apparently still believed such to be Johnson’s profession, “from the young man as was ill in our crib.”

Johnson hastily took the note, and read, with some difficulty, the following words, faintly scrawled in pencil :—

“I have not thought it advisable to stay here longer ; and by the time you receive this, I shall have left the place. You will hear from me as soon as I have again settled. Take care of *that*—you know—for we may need it.”

“When was this written ?” asked Johnson.

“Last night, sir,” was the reply, “before he left. I don’t think he was much fit to go. He looked uncommon cranky, to be sure !”

“Did anyone ever come to see him besides myself ?”

“There was a gentleman, sir, as come two or three times, and went off in a cab with him last night.”

“What sort of a man ?”

“A perfect gentleman, sir. He wore a scarlet neckcloth and mustachios.”

Johnson made no further remark, but remained for a few minutes lost in reflection. His visitor also kept perfectly silent, perched upon the extreme corner of a chair, with his legs tucked underneath it, after the manner of the common orders in general, when they sit down in company with their superiors—as if they thought it good breeding to wear out as little of the carpet as possible. And so they rested for a short period, Johnson finding out models of the Alps in the moist

sugar, and the man looking about at the neighbouring windows of the street, apparently calculating what sort of an audience he could entice to them on a future occasion.

"I beg pardon, doctor," said the visitor, at length breaking silence; "but perhaps you can be of some service to me?"

"Oh! certainly," replied Johnson, not exactly hearing the question. "What is it?"

"I keeps a fantoscopy, magic-lantern, and Punch, and perwides amusements for parties," continued the man. "I'll make bold, sir, to give you my card."

Whereupon he searched in some mysterious pocket of his fustian coat, and produced a small parallelogram of dirty pasteboard, imprinted with the information which he had conveyed to Johnson; and immediately afterwards dived into another capacious opening in his jacket, and dragged out a Punch's head, which he exhibited with great admiration, accompanying the action by one of the squeaks peculiar to that facetious puppet.

"There's a pictur' sir!—ain't it natural?" asked the man, looking at it with the affection of a parent. "My partner's going to tog it to-night; and then we shall keep it for families of respectability."

"I think it is too smart for the streets," said Johnson, feeling himself called upon to pay some compliment to the wooden offspring of his visitor.

"Bless you! he'll never perform in the streets!" answered the man, apparently feeling his *protégé* insulted; "the dodges there is too violent for such a handsome Punch as this. He's too genteel to attract the street people, he is. He wouldn't draw no more than a second-hand blister upon a milestone."

"Then what is he for?" asked Jack.

"Why, you see, sir, we are obliged to cut the jokes uncommon underdone for families; they doesn't like the baby being thrown out o'window, nor the coffin for Jack Ketch."

"And why not?"

"Because the children always pitches their dolls into the streets, to imitate us, from the nursery windows. I've know'd 'em try to hang the babies, where there has been any, before this."

Johnson could not forbear smiling at the man's caution, in assuming to himself the censorship of his own drama; but, as he was at present in no very great humour for talking, he told him that he would let him know if he required his services, previously to wishing him good-morning. And when he was gone, Jack again fell into a train of anxious thought respecting his cousin, mingled with a certain proportion of apprehension lest he should be inveigled into any unpleasant position from the trifling share he had taken in the transaction. More than once he felt tempted to start immediately to the bank from which Morris had absconded, and return the whole of the money entrusted to his charge, which, to his surprise, amounted to upwards of a hundred sovereigns; but then, the solemn promise he had made to his cousin, and the hope that he might still be reclaimed, again changed his resolution, and for a period he remained in exceeding

perplexity ; the reaction, after his high spirits of the previous evening, in no wise tending to make him think the better of the world or its inmates, or helping him, for the moment, to place things in a more cheering point of view. Then he thought of his own position, and the little prospect which appeared of his ever being able to improve it sufficiently to reach that proper station in society which, with all his levity, he wished to occupy ; and this point of his ruminations brought him again to Emma Ledbury, towards whom he could not persuade himself that his feelings were altogether indifferent. And, finally, he thought of all these things at once, until he got into a labyrinth of intricate ideas that almost made him imagine his brain was revolving on its own axis.

We have never studied metaphysics, nor shall we make the attempt until we have heard an argument upon that science which will conclude by one of the parties disputing being brought round to the other's way of thinking—a consummation we never yet witnessed ; but we may, perhaps, be allowed to speak of the elasticity of the mind as one of its most glorious attributes. It turns the brain into a stuffed spring-seat for the weary spirits to repose upon after any unusual exertion ; and provides an easy-chair for thought nearly worn out by trouble, luxurious and repose-inviting as any hydrostatic bed. And very accommodating indeed was Jack Johnson's mental organisation in this respect, for it resembled the metal coil of a patent candlestick ; since, however forced down by contingent circumstances, yet, as soon as a light dispelled the dark shade that hovered round, it rose up again higher and higher, until the cause of its depression had disappeared altogether, and it retained its wonted freedom and elevation. He might, perhaps have been aptly considered as a human Jack-in-the-Box, whom no adverse casualties, however forcible at the time, could permanently beat down ; but, on the contrary, they enabled him to rise again above the gloom of his troubles, even with increased power and aspiring energy. Had he allowed himself to be depressed by every unpleasantry, he would have experienced a sad time of it altogether ; but he was, as we have seen, of a cheerful and vivacious disposition, rather inclined to look at the bright side of everything and everybody, and seldom paying trouble the compliment of meeting it half-way ; which, proceeding from a sense of politeness on the part of the coming evil, often causes it to advance with greater confidence when it would otherwise have kept off altogether.

Although Jack was not above six-and-twenty, yet he had lived and seen more than many with ten or twelve additional years on their shoulders. Thrown upon his own resources at comparatively an early age, he had precociously acquired a practical knowledge of the world, and the usages of nearly all classes of society. His father had been an idle and improvident man, always in embarrassed circumstances—although, it is but fair to state, more from carelessness than dishonesty—and allowing his children to grow up, rather than be brought up, solely because he would not exert himself to put them in the right path. The consequence was that upon his death a perfect

separation of the family took place ; one or two of the boys going to situations in the colonies, or other refuges for the destitute social-suicides ; and Jack, who was the eldest, inheriting what little property was left behind, which, whilst it was scarcely enough to enable him to live in moderate comfort, was yet sufficient to give him a distaste for exertion in following any avocation. And so, after trying various schemes, after having taken up medicine, literature, law, and even the drama, he gave up the pursuit of employment under difficulties, and eked out his small property by some of those mysterious occupations which men follow who are reported to live by their wits.

He had just determined upon taking a walk to Hampstead, to imbibe a little fresh air, when he heard a knock at his door ; and Mr. Ledbury came in, all smiles and pleasantry, with some violets in his button-hole, and looking quite like a gallant cavalier. From this, Jack inferred that he had been calling to inquire after the health of one of the *belles* who had shone on the preceding evening, which proved to be the case ; Mr. Ledbury having risen rather earlier than he would otherwise have done, and by crafty mechanical appliances of glue, riband, and gold-paper, mended a fan in most workmanship style which the most attractive of the partners had broken in one of the quadrilles ; and now he had been to return it, with many delightful speeches and compliments, and energetic assurances from the young lady that "it was the most delightful evening she ever recollected," as is customary on such occasions.

"Well, Jack ! old man ! how are you ?" was Mr. Ledbury's first question, as he shook hands with his friend.

"Oh ! very well, as the times go, Leddy ; What fun we had ! And what are you going to do to-day ?"

"Nothing particular," replied Ledbury : "can you put up anything ? I am not much inclined for work ; and they are doing nothing at home but putting things away. There's no great fun in that, Jack ?"

"Not much. How's the governor ?"

"Nobody has seen anything of him. The servants say he went into the city this morning, as usual—I believe a little time before they thought of going to bed. Well, what shall we do ?"

"Rush out, and take our chance of whatever may turn up," replied Jack, "I feel myself as if I wanted to be shaken about a little ; and I suppose they will not miss you at home ?"

"Not at all !" said Ledbury. "It will be a decided case of go-to-bed-early with all of them."

Whereupon they both agreed that they would make a night of it ; and Ledbury went back to Islington, intending to get the key, as well as a highly fashionable and picturesque ten-and-sixpenny coal-sack-looking coat, which he had been persuaded by Jack Johnson to buy for night-excursions ; promising to meet his friend in the afternoon, and dine with him at the old eating-house where we first introduced them both to the reader.

CHAPTER XVII.

OF THE ADVENTURE WHICH MR. LEDBURY, IN COMPANY WITH HIS FRIEND, MET WITH AT A PENNY SHOW.

TRUE to the appointment, just as the gas-lamps were beginning to glimmer in the haze of the declining daylight, and Hanway Yard and Great Russell Street were nearly filled with a stream of population (chiefly young ladies, governesses, and little girls, hurrying home in a north-easterly direction, to the squares, with the purchases they had been making at the West End), just as the post-meridian milk-pails intimated their arrival, with melancholy cry, at the areas of Alfred Place, and the *fresco* merchants of Tottenham Court Road began to exhibit their whity-brown paper transparencies, casting a mellow and subdued light upon the baskets, which, in company with Hesperus, brought "all good things home to the weary; to the hungry, cheer"—as we have it so well described by a great poet, who goes on to talk about the "welcome stall" and "hearthstones," which proved incontrovertibly he had Tottenham Court Road in his mind when he penned the stanza;—just at this time, then (for we are losing ourselves in a very long sentence, and must come back to where we began), Mr. Ledbury once more found himself at Jack Johnson's lodgings. His friend was finishing a letter for the post; and, requesting Ledbury to sit down for a short time, begged him to send out for some very immense and finely-flavoured half-and-half, which was to be obtained round the corner—a peculiar locality, where everything is always to be got. But, as dinner-time was approaching, Ledbury declined; contenting himself with borrowing Johnson's pipe, which he filled with some tobacco from the capacious stomach of a broken Lablache tumbler doll, standing on the mantelpiece, and then puffing away with suitable gravity, watching the smoke as it assumed a thousand fantastic shapes ere it disappeared; which occupation is presumed to be one of the chief pleasures which a pipe can offer.

At last they started off; and the moment they left the door, all Jack Johnson's vivacity returned, his merriment being in no degree lessened by the recollection of bygone frolics, which being out once more alone with Ledbury gave rise to. And Mr. Ledbury partook of his friend's hilarity, and even once attempted to chaff a policeman by making a courteous inquiry after the health of his inspector. After which Jack knoeked over a row of little boys, one after another, who were standing on their heads by the side of the pavement; which proceeding drew after them a volley of salutations peculiar to little boys, much increased when he put one of their caps in his pocket, and carried it with him an indefinite distance, concluding the insult by throwing it a great way into a linendraper's shop, where it hit one of the gentlemen in the white neckcloths, who revenged himself upon the little boy by kicking him out of the shop, across the pavement, and clean over to the cab-stand, the minute he went in to ask for it.

The dinner passed off with considerable spirit, aided by "the feast of reason, and the flow of"—beer; and, having ordered a pint of wine in a reckless manner, that completely paralysed the waiter, no such fluid ever having made its appearance there before in the memory of the oldest frequenter, they sallied forth again.

"I shall trust to you, Jack," said Ledbury; "for I am quite as ignorant of the ways of London as I was of Paris when I first got there. But I shall soon improve under your tuition."

They wandered through a number of back streets, making various observations, philosophical and playful, upon what they saw, until their attention was arrested by the announcement of an exhibition of peculiar interest, at the door of a house which they were passing; and several loiterers were on the pavement, listening to the organ that was playing to entice an audience, or endeavouring to peer into the mysteries of the *penetralia* beyond the entrance. The price of admission was one penny, which they both paid, after Johnson had offered to toss the proprietor whether they should give him twopence or nothing—a speculation which the exhibitor repulsed with much indignation.

Mr. Ledbury felt rather nervous as he approached the dark portal of the exhibition-room; and was not reassured upon asking a decent-looking female seated at the door which was the way in receiving no answer; until he perceived he had been addressing a wax-likeness of Maria Martin. At last they arrived at a long room, adorned with panoramic paintings of several of the most favourite localities in the artist's imagination—the most effective being a view of Constantinople from the middle arch of Blackfriars Bridge. A large party of wax heads, put upon bodies, and furnished with clothes, were ranged round the room; and the inventive facetiousness of the owner had been taxed in assigning to them various names of popular or notorious individuals, whom he supposed or wished them to resemble. Mr. Ledbury had never been to Madame Tussaud's, nor, indeed, had he seen any wax figures at all, except the vivid representation of a gentleman as he appeared with his hair curled in the window of a *coiffeur* at Islington, who had been by turns Marshal Soult, Prince Albert, and the King of Prussia; so that he was still somewhat awed at finding himself in the presence of so many great people. But at last he took courage from watching the reckless manner in which Jack Johnson behaved, questioning the exhibitor right and left respecting his curiosities.

"This," said the man, approaching a species of oblong cucumber-frame with great importance—"This is the mummy of an Egyptian about three thousand year old."

"Bless me!" observed Jack, with an air of great importance; "what an age they lived to in Egypt! Pray, sir, is it Cheops?"

"No sir," replied the man, indignantly; "it's real bones and flesh."

"I never saw a mummy," said Ledbury, peering into the case upon the compound of pitch and brown paper which it enclosed.

"You'll see thousands soon," replied Jack. "The New Asphalte Company are going to import all they can find in Egypt, to pound them up and pave the walks of Kensal Cemetery with. Come along, or we shall lose the description."

"This is George the Fourth," said the man, pointing to a very slim figure, with a theatrical crown on his head.

"I thought he was a very stout man," observed Ledbury, plucking up sufficient courage to make an observation.

"Very likely," replied the man shortly, not approving of the comments of his visitors; "but if you'd been here without victuals half as long as he has, you'd be twice as thin."

There was a laugh from the other spectators; and Mr. Ledbury, completely overcome, did not offer any more remarks, but followed the man and his audience to another *salon* upstairs, where a coarse red curtain was drawn across the room, concealing more wonders. The exhibitor formed his audience into a semicircle upon low forms round the chamber; and then, first of all, led forward a young lady with pink eyes, who appeared to have allowed no end of silkworms to spin all over her head; and next, a little man about two feet high, in knee-breeches and mustachios, who bowed very politely to the company, and then, without further preface, struck up a song with a very indistinct articulation, which Jack Johnson defined to be expressive of fear, commencing, as nearly as he could catch the words, "My heart's in my highlows!"

He had not got through four lines, when Ledbury heard a sudden noise in the thoroughfare upon which the window close to him looked down—one of those mysterious localities only disclosed when their unknown topography is occasionally invaded by a new street. A hack-cab had stopped at the top of the court, surrounded by a crowd of people, who beset it on either side, peeping in at the windows, crawling up to the box, and betraying various other signs of intense curiosity to behold what was inside. Presently a couple of policemen appeared, and cleared a passage to the door; and then Ledbury saw a female, in what appeared to him a theatrical dress, carried from the cab to the door.

"Look here!—what is going on below?" said Ledbury, interrupting the dwarf's song, and calling the attention of the man to the window.

The noise in the court had put all the inhabitants on the *qui vive*; and every window had an occupant gazing upon the tumult. The neighbours, also, had assembled on the steps of each other's doors to inquire "What was the row?" and add to the general Babel of chatter; for a disturbed ant's nest is a scene of tranquillity compared to the sudden gathering of a court in a low London neighbourhood when an itinerant posture-master, a drunken riot, an insulted policeman, or an unexpected accident, breaks in upon its general uniformity of dirt, drunkenness, and poverty.

"I'm shot if it ain't Letty brought home bad!" observed the man to the dwarf, as he caught a sight of the girl, who was being taken into the house.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" cried the little dwarf, in accents of distress, as he stopped his song, "what has happened to her?" And, hurrying towards the window, round which the greater part of the audience now collected, he ran backwards and forwards, trying to peep between them,

as we have seen a mouse do between the wires of his cage when newly introduced.

"I'll be much obliged to you to go away, ladies and gentlemen, if you please," said the showman. "I think an accident has happened to a young woman as lives in the house."

"Keep by me," whispered Johnson to Ledbury, as the people were departing, "and we may see something here. I am a medical man," he continued, addressing the exhibitor, "and so is my friend. We shall be happy if we can be of any service to you."

The offer was thankfully accepted; and, leaving Ledbury for a minute to make the agreeable to the young lady with the pink eyes, Johnson and the showman, followed by the dwarf, whose countenance betrayed extreme anxiety, went downstairs, and met a policeman carrying the girl, whom they immediately assisted.

Being directed to one of the rooms at the top of the house, they had some little difficulty in supporting their patient up the steep and narrow stairs; nor were their clothes improved by the contact of the rough and craggy walls on each side of them, the plaster from which had fallen off in large flakes, laying bare the laths in several places, and crushing under their feet as they ascended. At every landing the occupants had collected from curiosity, peeping over one another's heads through the half-opened doorways of their apartments, one or two miserable slip-shod females following them upstairs.

They kept going up and up until they came to the topmost garret, and here they entered, when Johnson ordered the policeman to remain at the door, admitting only Ledbury, the albiness, and the dwarf. They then placed their patient upon an apology for a bed in the corner of the room, and proceeded to ascertain what had befallen her.

It appeared that she had been dancing on the tight-rope as a "Swiss gleaner," or something of the kind, at one of the inferior musical taverns of the neighbourhood; and the rope, not having been firmly secured by the pulley, had slipped and thrown her upon the floor, giving her foot a severe wrench. She was unable to stand, and her face assumed an expression of acute pain, ill-disguised by the coarse rouge and powder covering her features, which, but for their jaded and anxious look, would have been perfectly beautiful.

Whilst the pink-eyed girl was divesting the sufferer of a few outer portions of her tawdry spangled dress, Johnson sat upon an old deal box in the corner, and cast a glance round the room. From the slanting roof, it was evidently immediately beneath the tiles, and about ten feet square. A few bricks, divided by pieces of old iron hooping, formed the fireplace; but the blackened front of the mantelpiece, and ceiling altogether, showed the smoke had a predilection for the interior of the apartment, instead of going up the chimney, in spite of the tattered piece of drapery nailed across the top of the aperture to improve the draught. A patched and ancient bed-curtain, which had once been blue-check, attached to a line, divided the room into two small portions. There was an old Dutch clock in one corner of the apartment, surmounted by a quaint little figure of a skeleton, which moved away in unceasing unison with the beat of the pendulum; but

as the hands pertinaciously refused to move, except when they went occasionally a little backwards, the whole affair seemed in the situation of a favourite done-up horse turned out for the rest of his life in a paddock, who, having worked hard in his time, and being no longer useful, is allowed to go on as he likes, just for his own amusement. A few articles of stage costume and jewellery were scattered about the room, and some worn-out slippers, edged with tarnished lace, were lying upon the floor.

"Well, now we'll see the foot," said Johnson, kindly, as he approached the bed.

"I hope you're not going to cut me, sir," said the dancer, entertaining the common opinion of the lower orders, that no operation can be accomplished without knives.

"No, no! you need not alarm yourself," replied Johnson, grasping the foot, and moving it in different directions. We have said that he knew something of surgery, and the examination sufficed to show him that no bones were broken. But he kept up the importance of his assumed profession, and, turning round to his friend, said, "Now, Mr. Ledbury, have the kindness to look at this. I think you will agree with me that there is no fracture."

For a wonder, Ledbury perceived his drift, and pretending to examine the joint, although with much trepidation, returned a satisfactory answer.

"It is a bad sprain," continued Johnson, "and will require rest. Have you any rags, for some pads and a bandage?" he asked of the albiness.

The pink-eyed girl didn't know—she was not quite sure—the children did take everything so, and she had only been saying that morning that they shouldn't do so. Last week she had plenty more than she knew what to do with; but now she hadn't any.

The dwarf, who had been silently watching the whole of the scene with great interest, went outside the door, and communicated with the man on the landing. The result of the conference was an agreement to rob the heads of Courvoisier and Oliver Cromwell of their contents; and, the plan being adopted, a quantity of rags was the result, which Johnson soaked in some vinegar, and applied with praiseworthy adroitness.

"How long do you think it will be before my sister can dance again, sir?" asked the dwarf.

"Is this your sister?" exclaimed Johnson, somewhat amazed to think that so small a man could have so well-formed a relation.

"She is, indeed, sir—by the same mother," replied the dwarf, as he clasped one or two of her fingers in his tiny hand.

"She must not think of moving just yet," said Johnson, not knowing exactly what space of time to mention.

"It is a bad job both for Madame Angelique and myself," said the girl, despondingly.

"And who is Madame Angelique?" inquired Jack.

"She dances the double dance with me, sir, that earns us most money," said the girl. "She cannot do it by herself."

"Tilly Davis could learn it very soon, I'm sure," said the dwarf, most probably alluding to another *artiste*: "but I don't know where she's gone since she quarelled with the Chinese gladiator at Croydon fair."

"I shouldn't wonder," said the pink-eyed girl, "if she is one of the Styrian Stunners at the Albert Pavilion. You can see to-morrow."

This appeared to be a great triumph of suggestion, from the manner in which it was received by the girl and her friends. And now, upon the patient's declaring that she felt much easier, Johnson and Ledbury prepared to take their departure, having promised, with grave looks, to call and see how the foot was going on the next day. Then leaving the albiness with her, they went downstairs to the room they had quitted at the time of the accident, lighted by the dwarf, who carried an emaciated candle stuck in an old inkstand, so yellow and thin that it appeared to have suffered from jaundice for some time.

The policeman, having been treated to a glass of gin, went away, having first engaged to call upon Johnson the next morning, who promised to procure him an outdoor patient's order for one of the hospitals, to cure a bad cough from which he suffered; the man having applied to him, believing him to be a surgeon, and receiving no benefit from the medical man attached to the force.

"I beg you'll be seated, gentlemen," said the dwarf, as they entered the show-room, now quite deserted. "I have nothing to offer but a glass of whisky, which I hope you will do me the favour to taste."

There was such an appearance of gratitude, and anxiety to evince it, in the little man's manner, that Ledbury and his companion seated themselves at the fire-place, and accepted the proffered refreshment.

"That is very fine," said Johnson, as he drank off the contents of a wine glass without a stem, and handed it to Ledbury.

"It is very good. I believe, sir," answered the dwarf. "I had an Irishman in my exhibition once, who was the Wild Malay. We were very good friends, and sometimes he sends me some."

"You are master, then, of this establishment?" asked Ledbury, with as staid a politeness as a fit of coughing, brought on by the whisky, would permit.

"I am, sir," returned the little man. "It is very hard work, though: and my health is not very good. I have sung my song four-and-twenty-times in a day, when I could hardly hold my head up. Once I used to wince under the jokes of the spectators at my figure; but I do not mind them now."

"Does your sister belong to the show as well?" inquired Johnson.

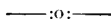
"She did, until about a twelvemonth ago, sir," replied the dwarf, as his voice fell, "and then she left me for a time. Poor thing! poor thing! I believe him to have been a villain, although she was very fond of him. But she has suffered for it!"

There was something very touching in the mannikin's voice as he uttered these words. Johnson, with ready tact, immediately turned the

conversation, fully sorry that he had led up to it. They sat some little time longer, much amused at the intelligence and conversation of their small host; and then, wishing him good-night, took their leave, promising to return.

"It is very strange," said Johnson to Ledbury, when they gained the street, "that all this should have happened. I know that girl's face as well as I know yours, and I thought that once or twice she regarded me very strangely. Where can we have met?"

"I would not trouble myself to find it out," said Ledbury. "Those things always come upon you all at once, and so will this. In the meantime let us hunt up some more amusement."



CHAPTER XVIII.

OF THE DIVERTING MANNER IN WHICH MR. LEDBURY CONCLUDED THE EVENING.

AFTER a variety of minor adventures, not of sufficient importance for us to chronicle, although highly interesting to the parties concerned, our friends found themselves, about midnight, in the neighbourhood of the theatres. Crossing over in the direction of Covent Garden Market, and enlivening the journey by occasional banterings with the basket-women, in which, it must be confessed, they generally got the worst of it, they entered Maid Lane. Lingerin an instant over the kitchen-grating of the Cyder Cellars, in contemplation of the large fire, and affectionate admiration of the viands there displayed, they went down one flight of stairs, and up another, until they stood at the entrance of the supper-room.

"Now, then, Leddy, go ahead!" said Johnson, giving his friend a push.

"Beg your pardon, gentlemen," interrupted the waiter at the door, placing himself in their way; "song's going on."

"Well, let it go on, if it likes," said Johnson, "I don't want to stop it."

"No, sir," replied the waiter, in a vague negative; "only it interrupts the harmony."

In the course of two minutes, an unusual excitement in singing the chorus proclaimed that the "harmony" was about to finish.

"Is this your first visit here?" asked Jack of Ledbury, to which he received an answer in the affirmative.

"Very well, then," he continued, "they will be sure to applaud you as a welcome when you enter; so be prepared."

In another instant the song concluded; and, as Jack seized

Ledbury by the hand, and led him into the room, the burst of applause commenced, meant, of course, for the singer, but Mr. Ledbury took it to himself, and, removing his hat, as he would have done in a French *café*, smiled very amicably, and kept bowing on either side with much grace, all the way to the top of the room, to the great admiration of the spectators; and at last he took his seat, amidst the jingling of stout-glasses and the cries of "*Encore!*" the shouts for "Waiter," and the concussions of pewter-goes upon the table. The room had just filled from the theatres, and the usual bustle was in full play. There were a great many guests devouring poached eggs and roast potatoes as if they had eaten nothing for a month; and a great many others smoking and drinking grog, and some talking, and others asleep, so that altogether there was a large company.

"This is a gratifying sight, indeed, Jack!" said Mr. Ledbury, rubbing his hands with glee, and feeling considerably better for a pint of stout. "What a noble room!"

"And noble company, too," replied Johnson, getting wicked. "You would not credit the number of great people who come here."

"Law! Point out some of them to me," said Ledbury.

"Do you see that gentleman in the white Chesterfield, with the green shawl, and his hat on one side, sitting by the third pillar? Well, that's Sir Robert Peel."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Ledbury, rising to get a better view of the gentleman. "And who are those two next to him?"

"Why, I think they are Count Kielmansegge and Baron Bjornstjerna."

"Who?" asked Mr. Ledbury, somewhat confounded.

"Don't ask me again," said Johnson; "they are troublesome names to pronounce. They are the Hanoverian and Swedish ambassadors."

"I suppose Prince Albert never comes?" observed Ledbury.

"I think not," said Johnson, sinking his voice, and speaking confidentially; "but I have seen Herr Von Joel here."

"God bless me!" exclaimed Mr. Ledbury, not liking to appear ignorant, and setting down the last-named person as a relative of the Prince.

A knock from the chairman's hammer on the table commanded silence for a song, which was immediately obeyed by everybody calling out "Order!" at once. When quiet was obtained, the gentleman who did the comic melody sang a humorous song, at which Mr. Ledbury so laughed that his joyous hilarity was the admiration of everybody near him. There were one or two points in the song to which very staid people might have taken a slight exception; but it told very well in the present company, and was followed up by enthusiastic cries of "*Encore!*"—a word implying a wish to hear anything over again, which the singer attended to by trolling out an entirely different one.

Thus things went on, and aided by grog and excitement, Mr. Ledbury's mirth became fast and furious. He was in ecstasies. He laughed at the comic songs, applauded the sentimental ones,

slapped Jack Johnson on the back, and once even attempted to make a pun ; but this was not until after the second go of brandy. At last Jack reminded him that it was getting late, and he had a long way to go home. ☞

“Home !” said Mr. Ledbury ; “never mind home ! What’s the use of going home ? You can always go there when you can go nowhere else.”

And, indeed, he did not seem at all inclined to seek his paternal roof, until Johnson had used all his eloquence and influence to persuade him. But then, before he left, he insisted upon thanking the company publicly for their kind reception of him ; and next he shook hands with all the singers, telling them how happy he was sure his father would be to see them all at Islington to stay a fortnight. Then he paid the like compliment to the waiters, and finally to Mr. Rhodes himself, thanking him for his hospitality, and assuring him that he had spent a very delightful evening.

Spirituos excitement does not receive much benefit from cold air, and, in consequence, Mr. Ledbury’s vivacity increased when he got out of the room. As he really had a great distance before him, Johnson, who felt little inclined to go to bed, walked with him almost as far as Sadler’s Wells Theatre, and then wishing him good-bye, and telling him to take care of himself, returned home. It was a fine frosty, moonlight night, and Titus remained for a little time gazing on the New River, between the iron rails, and allowed his thoughts to wander romantically to the happy days of his childhood when he fished therein, always buying his tackle at the adjacent shop, where there was a large stuffed perch in the window, about a foot and a half long, in the firm belief that he should catch nothing but similar ones. Having ruminated here for some little time, he pursued his journey towards the “Angel,” and when he arrived there, as he had not a very great distance further to go, he mechanically felt in his waistcoat pocket for his key. But how was he horrified to find it was not there ! He searched all his pockets twice over ; he took out his handkerchief, and shook it ; he even looked in the lining of his hat ; but all to no purpose—the key was gone ! And now in an instant the sense of his situation broke upon him. He could not go home. They had doubtless all retired to bed early, fatigued from the preceding evening ; and what would his father say if he disturbed the house at that unusual hour ? Johnson, he knew, would have given him a bed ; but he was at home by this time—upwards of two miles off. It was so late that the very inns were fast closed ; he did not even see a policeman to make inquiries of ; nor were any other persons about in the street that he chose to apply to. The nights were also the longest of the year, and he was very tired already, or he would have walked about until morning. In fact, he felt in a very awkward and uncomfortable plight, from which he saw at present no chance of escape.

But oftentimes, when everything around us assumes its darkest form, a light will break in from a quarter whence it was least of all expected ; and so it proved in the present instance. It will be hardly

necessary to inform our readers that High Street, Islington, where Mr. Ledbury now found himself, is an airy and imposing thoroughfare, intersected by a colossal turnpike, and bordered with broad foot-paths and trees. The intelligent and enterprising tradesmen of this locality have the custom of placing their ware for show on the broad space in front of their houses, and emblazoning their names and callings on standards there erected. Now, one of these good people—a cunning worker in metals—had caused a huge slipper-bath to be fixed against a tree in front of his house, about ten feet from the ground, possibly for the purpose of advertising the passers-by that he kept such articles for sale or hire. We believe this may be seen at the present hour.

Driven to desperation by circumstances, Mr. Ledbury resolved, as the bath caught his eye, to make it his lodging for the night, to which end it seemed very well adapted. Another time he would have thought himself in the last stage of insanity to have even dreamt of such a proceeding; but now the plan appeared very feasible, and by no means to be disapproved of. Making a rapid survey up and down the street, to see that he was unobserved, he took off his rough coat, and pitched it up on to the bath; and then ascended himself, by means of certain large nails and hooks, which the curious observer may still perceive driven into the trunk of the tree. Having ascertained, to his satisfaction, that the bath would bear his weight, he let himself gently into it; and, pulling his coat over his shoulders, was in five minutes perfectly settled and comfortable, delighted at his enterprising spirit, and feeling a thrill of excitement from his novel position.

For a time he employed his mental powers in the contemplation of the heavenly bodies; and then, his love of harmony once more gaining the ascendant, he indulged in a few snatches of songs, commencing with, "I'll watch for thee from my lonely tower," as the most appropriate. But he had not sung above half a dozen, when a policeman of the N division, parading down High Street on his beat, and holding his lantern successively to the keyholes, as if he expected to find a thief getting through them, was struck by sounds of harmony, proceeding evidently from some elevated position close at hand. His first impulse was to look up to the houses; but as the middle of January is a strange time for people to sing with open windows at three in the morning, he found no solution of the mystery. Then he looked up the trees, and amongst some tubs piled at their feet, but nobody was there; and he was giving up the search, and going away, when a sudden burst of melody once more attracted his attention, and looking round, he perceived, in strong relief against the moon, what eventually turned out to be Mr. Ledbury's conical French hat showing above the rim of the bath, and rocking backwards and forwards in time to the song he was giving forth.

"Halloo there!" shouted the policeman, as he advanced to the foot of the tree. "Who are you?"

Mr. Ledbury's song immediately ceased, and his head peeped over the top of his tin bed-room.

"Come, I'll trouble you to walk a short distance with me," continued 135 N.

"I don't want your company," said Mr. Ledbury, rather haughtily. "I am not in the habit of associating with policemen."

"Now, are you coming?" repeated the policeman, getting impatient.

"No," replied Ledbury, "I am not; and I won't go home till morning, until daylight doth appear."

"Where is your home, then?" asked the policeman.

"Mr. Ledbury's, you know; you were at the door last evening. So go away and leave me; 'for it's my delight of a shiny night, in the season of the year,' to sleep where I choose. It's a wager."

The man immediately recognised his intended prisoner, and seeing it was all right, and that he was not a burglar, directly altered his tone, coming to the conclusion that Mr. Ledbury was a little flighty.

"You must find it very cold, sir," said N. "I think you had better come down."

"Cold!" said Ledbury, still harmonious; not at all; it's the warmth of its December, and the smiles of its July."

"There's a fire at the station-house," observed the policeman, holding out an inducement for Titus to descend.

"Now, don't worry me, there's a good fellow!" replied Mr. Ledbury. "I'm very well here, and mean to stay. Leave me alone, and call me at seven o'clock, if I am not down."

Seeing that the gentleman was determined, and not exactly making out how he could be got down, if he did not choose to descend himself, the policeman walked away. But he kept watch still over the bath and its contents, returning at short intervals to see that all was right. At two or three visits Mr. Ledbury was still singing; but at length he became tired, and, pulling his coat all over the top of the bath, covered himself in, and, it is presumed went into a doze. And when the first grey light of morning crept over the district, before the crowd of passengers had commenced, he came cautiously down, and returned to his home. The servants were just up, so that he had no occasion to disturb the household; only telling them not to say anything about his entrance, he walked quietly up to his own room, and, undressing himself, got into bed—his brain being still a little confused, although he was pleased to see the key of the door on the dressing-table, whence he had forgotten to take it the evening before.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ENCAMPMENT AT BURNHAM BEECHES.

If the reader wished us to point out to him one of the loveliest bits of rural scenery in our leafy England, so tranquil and secluded, and yet comparatively so small a distance from an important and bustling highway, that anyone wishing to live the life of a convivial anchorite could therein combine his retirement with every novelty or luxury that the great world could offer, we would conduct him into the centre of a finely wooded district in Buckinghamshire. Its goodly trees may be perceived by the traveller on the Great Western Railway, after he has passed the Slough station, on the headland to the right of the line, between Farnham Common and Dropmore, and it is known as Burnham Beeches.

The tract of land, broken and irregular, is thickly covered with the trees from which it takes its name, presenting some of the finest and most picturesque specimens of forest scenery in the kingdom. Long shady avenues of velvet turf, spangled with daisies, and teeming with quivering harebells, pierce the greenwood in every direction; now as small footpaths, climbing up the side, and running along the edge of some forsaken and precipitous gravel-pit; and now plunging into the depths of the forest, apart from the beaten track, amidst coverts of fern and underwood, until they widen into fair glades. These are bordered on either side by the gnarled and misshapen boles of trees, venerable in their garniture of hoary lichen, whose moss-covered and distorted trunks, far above the ground, offer natural and luxurious settles to the visitor, and induce him to rest a while, as he lingers with a sense of intense pleasure, so exquisite that it almost amounts to pain, upon the deep tranquillity and loveliness around him. And many changes have those old trees seen, during the centuries of smiling summers and stern winters that have rolled their sunshine and shadow over their venerable head-tops; they have budded and put on their foliage when the chimes of Burnham Abbey called the villagers to the compline, and the low chaunt of Saxon prayer floated on the breeze towards them; they will still put forth their verdure when the very recollection of those who now loiter in their shade shall have passed away. The remembrance of the calm seclusion of Burnham Beeches, when once visited, will never be banished from the mind of the traveller; but come back fresh and green upon his heart, after many years of worldly toil and harassing existence, and cheer his pilgrimage, by awakening every old and pleasant association connected with the time when all was fair and peaceful as the surrounding prospect.

But at the exact period of our story few of these attributes were visible, for it was towards the end of January; whilst a heavy snow lay upon the ground, and was still falling, from which the huge stems

of the trees started up like spectres, black and fantastic from the contrast. Everything was wrapped in the dead silence of the country, broken only by the occasional report of a gun, sharp and clear in the freezing air, which echoed for a few seconds through the woodland and then died away; or the fall of small heaps of snow, disturbed from their equilibrium by the perching of some intrusive sparrow, restless with hunger, and tumbling through the crisp and naked branches of the trees. Even the waggons and horses, with muffled wheels and feet, went noiselessly across the common, pulling up the snow after them, and leaving marks like those we see upon removing the ornaments of a twelfth-cake—the only evidences of sound which they gave out being the creaking and straining of the wheels as they lumbered over the heavy ground, or the flick of the driver's whip.

Along one of the principal avenues of the beeches, about the middle of the day, anyone who had chosen to take his station there at such an uninviting time, and, keep an attentive look-out, might have seen a solitary pedestrian trying to make what way he might towards the centre of the wood. Had he been previously acquainted with the person, he would probably have recognised Spriggy Smithers—the gentleman in ankle-jacks, the acquaintance of Jack Johnson, who, it may be recollected, assisted him in building the temporary supper-room on the morning of the party at Ledbury's. We say he would probably have recognised our friend, because he might have been readily pardoned for not perceiving at first who it really was, Spriggy having swaddled himself up in so many old worsted comforters about his neck, and haybands round his feet and legs, as to destroy all leading traces of identity. His toilet was never very carefully made at the best of times, but now it was even more eccentric than ever: and he had mounted an additional ornament, in the shape of a red cotton handkerchief tied round his hat, over the band—for what exact purpose it is difficult to determine. An old game bag, patched and mended with pieces of sacking, carpet, net, and whatever had come uppermost at the time it was required, was slung over his shoulder, offering certain evidence, from its outward appearance, of being well filled; and he carried a long staff in his hand, which had been without doubt pulled from some eligible spray-pile that had fallen in the line of his journey.

It was snowing hard, as we have stated, and the feathery particles seemed to have combined against Spriggy, and put all their inventive powers to the stretch, that they might render his progress as uncomfortable as possible. They had evidently made friends with the wind, who entered into the joke as well, and blew them into his eyes, whenever he opened them wider than usual or lifted up his face, until they made him wince again. Then they waited for him in sly corners at the tops of avenues, and when he came by they all scuffled out at once, and tumbled and whiffled about his head, the more desperate getting into his ears and violently rushing down his neck; but by the time he put up his hand to catch them they had all vanished away. The idler flakes did not personally insult him, but settled gently upon his hat, as well as the perfect absence of nap would allow them to

remain there, and contented themselves with being carried a little way for nothing, when they quietly disappeared, and were seen no more.

But, in spite of these intrusive annoyances, Spriggy still kept on his journey, occasionally turning off along a by-track, whose situation beneath the deep snow could be ascertained only by some peculiar briar or hornbeam in its vicinity, all of which were, however, as well known to him as our various coast landmarks to a Channel pilot. It was heavy walking, to be sure, and there was not a trace left by previous travellers to guide him, for the snow kept falling so thickly that even his own footmarks were soon obliterated, and all was as dazzling and level as before. But he had, as he termed it, put the steam on, which process was accomplished by lighting a short pipe; and, setting the snow at defiance, he crunched his way still deeper into the wood, until a sudden turn round a thicket of holly, yew, and other evergreens, brought him to the end of his walk.

The spot at which he now arrived was situated on the side of a small but steep declivity, part of which had given way in a landslip, forming the hill, as it were, into two large steps. Upon this platform, and against the embankment above, a large rude tent had been constructed of poles and ragged canvas, apparently the remnants of some ancient racecourse or fair drinking-booth. Before it the greater part of the snow had been swept away and two fires lighted, round which a large party of individuals was gathered, more or less disreputable, several having the costume and expression of real gipsies, but the majority evidently belonging to that anomalous class of perambulating manufacturers known as "tramps." A couple of tilted carts with chimneys were stationed near the tent, in one of which a fire was also burning, and to these were attached bundles of the thick sticks used to throw at snuff-boxes, as well as poles for building stalls; and one of them also carried a light deal table with three legs, from which an ingenious observer might have inferred that some of the party were versed in the necromantic mysteries of the pea-and-thimble. A pile of firewood had been collected, and stacked up close at hand; and lower down the slope, in a decayed cowshed, two miserable horses and a donkey were mumbing such scanty fodder as their owners could procure for them.

"Well, my beans—here we is," said Spriggy, announcing his own arrival, which was perfectly unnecessary, to judge from the cordial manner in which he was received. "How's the times?"

"Brickish," replied one of the party, showing a small bit of wool to the new comer. "Cooper took something in that line the night afore last from a farm t'other side the Splash."

"Cut up?" inquired Spriggy.

"Safe," replied the man, pointing to a large saucepan which was slung over one of the fires. "What have you brought?"

With an air of anticipated triumph, Spriggy unslung the game-bag he was carrying, and, shooting out a quantity of vegetables, at last produced a very fine jack, of some ten or twelve pounds weight.

"There's a jockey!" he exclaimed, admirably. "I took a pair of 'em with trimmers in Squire Who-is-it's fleet last night, and so!"

one to him this morning. Wouldn't the gov'nor swear neither if he know'd it!"

Whereupon, chuckling at his deception, in that hearty spirit ever displayed by the lower orders when they impose upon their superiors, Spriggy was attacked with such a fit of coughing, aggravated by the combined influence of night-air and mountain-dew, that it was found necessary to produce some cordial from a flat stone bottle, in possession of one of the party, to bring him round again; and, after a tolerable draught of its contents, poured into a small pipkin without a handle, he felt considerably relieved.

"And now to business," he observed, as soon as he had recovered his breath. "Is the Londoner still here?"

The man nodded his head, and pointed towards the cart.

"He's got into rather a okkard fix, then," continued Spriggy. "I've walked ten blessed miles this very morning to get him away, for there's no time to be lost."

"Are the beaks fly?" asked the man.

"Downey as goslings," returned Smithers. "They're coming here all in a lump, you may depend upon it, and 'won't do you much good if you ain't careful. How about that mutton?"

"All right," replied the tramp. "The snow hides it, and it will keep for ever if the frost lasts. But look sharp, if the young 'un is to be got off; for them rails is terrible things for quick journeys."

Following his advice, Spriggy went towards the cart, from whose chimney the smoke was ascending, and knocked at the door, which was fastened on the inner side. It was opened by Edward Morris—the cousin to whom Jack Johnson had paid the visit in St. Giles's, the night of his arrival in London. We have learned already that he had left the cellar; and he had now joined the present party, with one or two of whom he became acquainted in his late domicile, in the hope of remaining safely, in the refuge which their encampment offered, from the vigilance of the London police.

One of those delusive changes—the occasional supposed ameliorations which form, to the professional eye, the most distressing evidence of confirmed phthisis—had somewhat improved his appearance since the interview in St. Giles's. But his eye was brighter, his lips more vividly tinted, and the same self-satisfied conviction that he was quickly recovering from his "slight cough" only went to prove how the blighting canker was still rapidly, though silently, at work within. As Smithers informed him in a few words that his retreat was suspected, he betrayed some slight emotion, but immediately afterwards assumed his customary indifference, as he calmly inquired of his visitor what course was best to pursue.

"I reckon you are not much of a hand at walking, now you are bad!" said Spriggy; "and yet there are four or five miles of snow to be trudged through this afternoon if you wish to get away!"

"Why should I not walk?" asked Morris, hastily. "I am strong enough now to go any distance."

"I only want you to go as far as Eton Brocas," returned Spriggy.

“I’ve got a skiff lying there that will soon take us to my place at Penton Hook. The river’s as full as a tick, and will carry us down in no time of itself; but we haven’t a minute to lose.”

“I will be with you directly,” said Morris; “as soon as I have collected these few things. Tell them to keep awake, in case of any pursuit; and, of course, not to know anything about it. Do you hear?”

“All right,” replied Smithers, clapping his hand against his open mouth, intending to intimate by the pantomime that they would be silent.

Then, going back to his friends, he made a hasty but very satisfactory meal, whilst Morris was preparing for his departure. The whole business, rapidly transacted as it had been, scarcely seemed to disturb the economy of the camp in the slightest degree. Possibly they were accustomed to such scenes, for they took no notice of what was going on, although by this time all of them were perfectly aware of the circumstances; their only care being, apparently, directed to putting their social establishment in order, and disposing of such objects as might give rise to any unpleasant arguments with the expected police as to right of possession or lawful acquisition; and when this was done, they set to work in their tent, making clothes-pegs and door-mats with an alacrity that would have led anyone to believe he was visiting a most industrious community of hard-working individuals.

In a quarter of an hour from the commencement of this hurried interview all was arranged, and Spriggy, re-lighting his pipe, led the way, having put the parcel of the other into his empty game-bag, followed by Morris, to whom he had given his staff as an assistance. The gipsies watched their forms until they were lost in the copse of evergreens, and then resumed their wonted occupations.

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CHAPTER XX.

THE FLIGHT OF JOHNSON AND MORRIS AT SAVORY’S WEIR.

THE policeman for whom Jack Johnson had promised to procure the out-patient’s ticket to the hospital presented himself at that gentleman’s lodgings the next morning, some little time before the appointed hour. He apologised for so doing by informing Jack that he had received orders, in company with others of the force, to proceed that very day to the country, in pursuit of a young man charged with felony, who was supposed to be concealed in the neighbourhood. It is needless to state that Johnson’s suspicions were immediately aroused

as to the object of the search ; but, assuming an indifference as well as he was able, he contrived not only to learn that it was indeed Morris they were in search of, but also to worm out a description of the locality in which they expected to find him.

Informed of the danger that threatened his cousin by this singular chance, as soon as the officer had departed he began to consider by what means it was possible to avert the impending evil ; and, after half an hour of anxious thought, he determined upon leaving town without delay, and endeavouring to give Morris timely notice of the pursuit by arriving at the Beeches before the police, should he be fortunate enough to get the start of them. He therefore lost no time in proceeding to the railway, but had the mortification of finding that one of the trains had left scarcely a minute before he arrived at the terminus, involving a delay of two hours ; and, to add to his dismay, he learnt from one of the guards, after a few indirect inquiries, that several police officers were included amongst the passengers. Under the present circumstances this was most unfortunate, as there was no resource left except to wait until the next departure. At length, after two hours—which appeared multiplied into half a dozen—of harassing suspense, Johnson took his seat in the train, and set off, as fast as steam could take him, for the Slough station.

There was yet some little daylight before him when he arrived at the end of his journey ; and the fall of snow had ceased for a time, although the sky still looked threatening. He immediately went to the hotel and procured a horse, thinking that he should travel quicker by that means ; at the same time he was anxious not to be embarrassed by the company of another person. Whilst the animal was being saddled he got all the information he wished respecting his route to the Beeches from the ostler ; and also found out that the officers had not long departed, having waited some time at the inn “to keep out the cold.” This information induced him to use more haste ; so that in three-quarters of an hour from his leaving Paddington he was riding in the direction of Farnham Common, across the uplands, as fast as the state of the roads would permit.

As he arrived at the less-frequented lanes and bridle-paths, he plainly made out the traces of the party who had preceded him, as well as some prints of horses' shoes, from which he conceived that they had procured the assistance of the local horse-patrol as guides. He inquired of every person he met how long the police had passed, and from everyone received the reply that they were about twenty minutes ahead of him, but were not using very great speed, in consequence of one or two of them being on foot. There was but a slender chance, he knew, of reaching Morris before them, more especially as they were in advance ; but still the chance was worth pushing for, and he determined at all hazards to ride on at a quickened pace, and pass the officers as a casual traveller. He therefore took advantage of a favourable piece of road to increase his speed, and soon reached the borders of the common at a sharp trot.

A shepherd was standing, with his dog, at the gate of a field which he now came to, and he pulled up for a minute to ask which road he

should take—for several thoroughfares crossed one another at this point, and the footmarks were lost amidst many others.

“Are you along of them patrols?” asked the rustic.

Johnson hesitated for a instant, and then thought it best to answer in the affirmative.

“I seed them go up the hill nigh half an hour back,” continued the rustic. “They’re after a poacher in the Shaw—ain’t ‘em?”

“Yes, yes,” answered Johnson, “I think they are; but which is the nearest way?”

“Why, if you likes to come over this field,” said the man, “and through that gap at the end, you’ll cut off two miles or more.”

“That will do,” said Johnson; “and there’s a shilling for you.”

“Thankye, sir,” answered the man, touching his hat, and apparently overcome by the munificence of the present. “You’ll just put up the hurdle again when you’ve got through.”

“All right!” exclaimed the other; and, setting off again, he was soon at the end of the field.

Skirting the copse all the way, he passed through the gap, as directed; and then, crossing another long meadow, he pushed down the hurdles without caring to replace them, and entered one of the avenues of the Beeches. Fortunately, while he was deliberating which direction to proceed in, an urchin came up with a bundle of dry brushwood; and, finding that he was going to the very spot, forming in himself a small member of the gipsy community, Johnson stimulated him to a little increased action by the promise of a few pence; and, starting the boy to run before him, he followed as closely as he could without riding him down. They traversed several thickets, in some of which the branches hung so low that Johnson was compelled to stoop completely forward, until his head touched the horse’s neck. At length, to his inexpressible joy, he saw the fire of the encampment shining through the trees of the Shaw in intermitting flashes.

The whole party of gipsies, and their associates, were apparently in great confusion when Johnson arrived; and one or two approached him, when they saw that he was alone, with countenances expressive of anything but courtesy or polite reception. But, luckily, the man who had conversed with Spriggy Smithers in the morning was amongst them, and he directly recognised Johnson as a friend of Morris, having been in the St. Giles’s cellar on the evening when the former called. He immediately explained to him what had occurred—producing no little alarm in our hero’s mind when he told him that he was too late after all, for that the police had been there already; in fact, it was singular enough he did not meet them, as they had not left above ten minutes.

“And what has become of Morris?” inquired Johnson, anxiously.

“Of the young man?” replied the other. “Oh! he’s all safe at present with Smithers; but I don’t know how long he’ll be so.”

The tramp here informed Johnson of his cousin’s having left them with Spriggy in the morning; but added that the police had gained intelligence of his flight by some extraordinary means or another—for that, upon failing to discover their expected prisoner in the Shaw, he

heard them express their intention of going directly to Penton Hook, where Smithers resided.

"They're uncommon crafty birds, them police," he concluded. "I think they'd find a man in the middle of a haystack, when he wasn't there even."

"Would there be any chance of passing them?" asked Johnson.

"Like enough, like enough," returned the man. "Its nine miles if it's an inch; and they are sure to have a drain or two upon the journey."

"There is a hope yet, then," thought Jack; and, bestowing another trifling gratuity upon the man for his information, he turned his horse's head, and once more started upon his enterprise.

The wind howled mournfully through the naked branches of the copse, whilst the day was rapidly declining, as he quitted the Beeches and gazed upon the dreary expanse of country before him which he had to traverse, in its one unbroken cloak of snow, now darkening in the cold wintry twilight. Large flakes, the indications of an approaching heavy fall, began to descend, and the drifts were in many spots so high that the boundary of the road was scarcely perceptible. But, under the excitement of the position, Johnson urged his horse along a narrow lane, which had apparently remained undisturbed since the first fall, and, by dint of caution and no small degree of courage—for the snow in some places reached to his stirrups—he passed the more exposed portion of the country, and arrived at the comparatively low grounds below East Burulham, where the road was somewhat clearer, and allowed him to progress for a trifling distance with tolerable speed. But this was of short duration—the drifts had again collected from the uplands, and when he reached the line of the railroad, which crossed the lane, he found the archway completely filled up with snow. This presented, at first sight, an insurmountable obstacle to any further advance. It was impossible to cross the line, or he would immediately have done so, for the embankment directly beyond the ox-rails that bounded it, rising up like a wall, precluded the possibility of clearing them by a leap; nor, indeed, would it have been practicable upon level-ground, from the quantity of snow on either side. There was but one chance left, and that was to ride right through it, trusting to its being a mere curtain; but the horse refused to charge it, as if it had been a solid mass, and turned sharp round each time Johnson approached it. At length he hit upon a new plan. Without descending from the saddle, he took out his handkerchief and tied it as a bandage over the animal's eyes; then applying the whip pretty vigorously, urged him forward against it. The whole body of snow immediately crumpled down about him, and the horse, alarmed at the falling mass, made a violent plunge forward, which nearly threw Johnson from the saddle, but sufficed at the same time to clear the archway. The road to the leeward of the embankment was tolerably practicable; and, taking the handkerchief from the head of the horse, who was snorting and quivering with fright, he rode on with little delay through Slough, and along the turnpike road to Eton.

As he reached Windsor Bridge, and halted at the gate, he was much gratified to learn from the toll-keeper that the officers had not yet passed; and the lamps and animation of the town, as he slowly rode through its streets, somewhat reassured him; but when he had passed it, the darkness seemed more apparent from the lights which he had quitted. Still he kept on his way, stopping only for ten minutes at the "Bells of Ouseley," to take some hurried refreshment, before he crossed Runnymede.

The distant bell of Egham Church had tolled the hour of six as he arrived at this extended waste, and it was now quite dark—scarcely a star appearing in the black sky. The river, too, had in some places overflowed the road, rendering the greatest caution, necessary to distinguish between its depths and the firm ground, whilst the collected snow began to ball in the horse's feet, rendering every step precarious. There was no alternative for Johnson but to get down and walk at its head; and this he did with much difficulty and exertion, until he reached the causeway on the high road. Here there was very little snow, the sharp wind having carried it all away into the hollows as it fell; so, clearing out the shoes of his horse, he once more mounted, and the animal's hoofs rang sharply over the frozen ground towards Staines Bridge—the gas-lamps on which could now be seen about a mile off. After several inquiries, he learned the situation of Smithers' house; indeed, he could not well miss it, for they told him there was no other dwelling upon the road for two miles; and turning off from the great road, at the foot of the bridge, he traversed another rough piece of country, and in twenty minutes more was shouting for entrance at the gate of Spriggy's almost amphibious habitation on the banks of the Thames.

After some little delay, the owner of the mansion made his appearance at the door, where he remained, imagining that the noise proceeded from some traveller who had lost his way—interruptions of this kind, on such an out-of-the-way road, being by no means unusual. But as soon as he recognised Johnson's voice, he bustled forward and assisted him to dismount, leading the horse round to a small shed at the side of the house; and then, with a few expressions of surprise at his unexpected appearance, ushered him into the interior of the cottage. Morris was smoking at the fireside, but he started up, as if alarmed, when Johnson entered; and, shading the light of the solitary candle from his eyes, gazed anxiously towards the door.

"Jack! is it only you?" he exclaimed, as soon as he knew it was his cousin. "Who would have dreamt of seeing you here at this time of night? I declare I thought it was the police."

And, with an attempt to force a laugh of indifference, he resumed his place on the settle of the hearth.

"Is that all you have to say to me, Morris?" returned Johnson, as he approached the fireplace. "I am sorry you do not think me worth a better welcome."

"Oh!—well then, how d'ye do?—if that's it," replied the other, carelessly, holding out his hand. "I am better, you see—my cold is quite gone; I told you that it was nothing. But what brings you here?"

"The police are after you ; they have discovered your retreat."

"I know it," returned Morris ; "but we have given them the slip, after all."

"You are deceived," returned Johnson, with an earnestness that checked his cousin's derisive laugh. "They are now in pursuit of you, and a few minutes may bring them to the gate."

"Oh ! you must be mistaken. How could they have found out where I had gone to ?"

"I know not ; it suffices that they have done so, and are close upon my track."

As he spoke, a short, expressive whistle from Spriggy, who was stationed at the window, attracted their attention.

"Look !" he exclaimed, "if there isn't the bull's-eye lanterns coming down the lane, may I never set a night-line again. Up with the dead-lights until we see what stuff they are made on !"

He closed up the window shutter as he concluded this sentence, and a few seconds passed of anxious silence—so perfect, that nothing disturbed it but the quick, fevered respiration of Morris, which was painfully audible. Johnson held his breath, and compressed his lips between his teeth until he had nearly bitten them through ; whilst Smithers rapidly threw some water on the wood embers in the fireplace, extinguished the candle, and took up his position of sentinel at the door, having put up the bar, assuming an attitude of earnest watchfulness.

"Hush !" exclaimed the fisherman, after a short pause ; "it's them, sure enough ! Ah ! werry good !—werry good !" he continued, as the party were heard calling out from the lane ; "you must wait a bit ; we're all gone to bed, and asleep."

"We are taken !" cried Morris, in accents of distress, now losing all his fortitude. "What can be done ?"

"Get down to the river as fast as you can, by the back door," answered Spriggy. "You'll find the punt lying there ; and I'll keep 'em all right for five minutes ; but you must lose no time."

Quickly collecting their outward articles of dress, they prepared to follow his advice. Johnson gave a few brief directions to Smithers respecting the horse ; and then, catching up the lantern, which Spriggy had left on the floor, folded his coat round it, to conceal the light, and hurried towards the Thames in company with his cousin. The punt was moored there, hauled a little way up the bank. Morris directly entered, and took his seat at the end, while Johnson pulled up the iron spike that fastened the boat by a chain to the land ; and, pushing it off with all the force he could collect, jumped on to it as it floated in the deep water.

The river, swollen with the floods, was rapid and powerful ; and directly bore the punt away from the shore, whirling it round with ungovernable force in the eddies, and then bearing it at a fearful rate down the stream. But they had scarcely started when Johnson, to his horror, found that in their hurried departure they had forgotten to bring anything with them to guide it, and were, consequently, entirely at the mercy of the angry waters. In vain he endeavoured to arrest

its progress with a few slight rods, pertaining to some fishing apparatus, that were lying in the boat; they snapped off like reeds. In vain he caught at the large rushes that danced and coquetted with the stream, as the punt occasionally neared the side of the river. They eluded his grasp, or were torn away from their stems as if they were pieces of thread. On, on went the boat in its headlong career; the rapidly passing outlines of the bare and ghastly pollards on the river's bank proving how swift was their progress. And now, for the first time, they heard a deep and continued roar, which increased each moment, as if they were quickly approaching its source. Neither could offer an explanation of the noise; and they remained in painful anxiety for some seconds, until Johnson, who was endeavouring to peer through the darkness, cried out—

“I can see the barge-piles of the lock! We shall be carried down the weir!”



CHAPTER XXI.

THE NIGHT ON THE AIT.

THOSE acquainted with the course of the Thames from London to Windsor may remember that Penton Hook is a piece of land between Staines and Laleham, which turns the river into a narrow and sudden curve, cut off from the shore by the lock; while the main body of water flows round it with brawling rapidity on a sharp descent, forming a natural weir. Some strong piles were fixed at the head of the rapid, to keep the large craft from being drawn into the current, and about half-way round the Hook it gives off a small stream, called the Abbey river, which formerly washed the foundations of Chertsey Monastery, one of the most powerful mitred religious houses of its time.

The worn-out boat, carrying the two fugitives, was now being drifted by the turbulent river, towards this point; and the roar of the water, as it dashed between the head-piles of the lock, became fearfully louder and louder. Johnson kept at the head of the boat, or rather at whichever part went first, as it was whirled about in the eddies, and attempted to throw a little more light around them from the miserable candle in the old lantern they brought with them. And Morris, anticipating the swamping of the punt, which appeared inevitable, had risen from his seat; and, having thrown off his cloak, prepared to reach the land as he best might when the catastrophe

should arrive. Sometimes the boat neared the shore so closely that its edge grated against the rough stones of the embankment; but, before either of them could hold on, it had turned round again, and was once more in the middle of the deep and rapid channel.

Johnson had plainly discerned the dark forms of the head-piles stretching across the river, towards which they were now hurrying, and in another instant the punt was borne against the foremost one with a violent shock, that threw them both from their feet, and partly stove in the side, at the same time knocking down the lantern and extinguishing the light; but they immediately recovered their position, and endeavoured to cling to the ironwork of the standards, and arrest the progress of the boat. The power of the water was, however, too much for them; and, turning round the side of the piles, the punt rushed with fearful violence down the fall, and into the centre of the rapids below the weir, the water pouring in everywhere through the crevices of its battered sides. Swift as had been their passage before, it was now increased tenfold, as they grated successively over the stones of the shallows, or glided swiftly onward in the deep water, amidst the masses of ice which were floating everywhere on the surface of the current.

The country on either side was now more open, and the refraction of light from the snow on the banks enabled them to perceive objects somewhat more clearly than before. They were quickly approaching the entrance of the Abbey river, the position of which was marked by a few leafless shrubs on a small island, or ait, at the spot where the stream divided.

"It will be the turn of a straw as to which course the punt takes," said Johnson, hurriedly. "If she goes into the narrow river we are all right: for she will run her head into the bank immediately."

"She is half filled with water," replied Morris, who had retired to the other side of the well; "a minute more will settle it either way."

The boat appeared to approach the ait, now plainly visible on the dark water, in such a direct line that it was impossible to tell in which course they would be carried. In another instant it touched the side, and was for the moment fixed there, as if balancing which current to fall into. Taking advantage of the check, Johnson leant forwards, and seizing the branch of a willow that grew upon its edge, pulled the head of the boat to land before it swung round either way. Then, jumping on to the ait, which was not above ten or twelve feet across, he dragged the punt still further on the dry ground, and called upon Morris to join him, first taking care to secure their craft by winding the chain round the stem of the willow.

"Well, we may thank our stars that one risk is past!" said Jack, as his cousin landed.

"We have escaped drowning to perish with cold," replied Morris, in his customary unconcerned tone, now that the excitement of the danger was over. "Are we to remain all night on this wretched place?"

"If you can suggest any plan to get away, I shall be most happy to try it," returned Johnson. "It is not a spot, I grant, that anyone

would pick out for a gipsying party in the middle of January ; still, we have had a lucky escape."

For a few minutes they both remained silent, nothing being heard but the chafing of the river as it rushed past the ait, and the angry wind howling in dreary cadences over the surrounding wastes. Johnson felt for a short time slightly annoyed at the little gratitude his cousin evinced, after all his exertions to save him from the fate that threatened ; and Morris was literally too exhausted to talk, but wrapping his cloak closely about him, he leant, gasping for breath and shivering with cold, against the trunk of the willow. But Jack's kindness of heart was ever uppermost ; and knowing the state of his cousin's health, as well as being aware that he must be suffering acutely from the exposure, his feeling towards him was far more of sympathy than anger.

"You had better move about, Morris, if you are able," said Johnson, speaking first, and in the most conciliatory manner.

"It is dreadfully cold !" returned the other, faintly, as he endeavoured to stamp his feet upon the ground ; "I have scarcely any feeling left."

"Wait a while," cried Jack, as if struck with some bright idea ; "we will get a light, and see if there is any way of improving our present condition. It might be better, certainly, and it cannot be much worse."

"How can you procure a light ? The lantern is half-filled with water—it is impossible !"

"Devil a bit !" answered Jack. "Tallow don't soak up much, and we can wipe the candle dry. Where is it ?"

The lantern had rolled to the extreme end of the punt ; but Johnson recovered it, and throwing out the water, he procured a light from a box of cigar *allumettes* that he always carried with him. There was a little obstinacy and sputtering on the part of the wick at first, but at length it burned brightly ; and then Johnson hung the lantern on one of the short branches of the tree, whence it threw its rays over the ait, like a beacon in the dreary solitude.

"There is a bottle of spirits in my pocket," said Morris, "if you can unbutton my coat ; my hands are too cold."

"Come, come," returned Johnson, cheerfully, "we shall do very well now. I begin to think, after all, the life of Robinson Crusoe is not the tremendous lie I always imagined it to be. We will have a fire directly."

"Our position, to be sure, might have been worse," said Morris, with more than ordinary suavity, somewhat softened by Jack's evident attempt to comfort him.

"Worse ! I believe you," replied Jack. "You had your choice of two alternatives : to be with the police or at the bottom of the icy river. Look at that bright star !—mind how slyly he winks at us for having jockeyed them both. Now, see what I'm going to do."

To collect every particle of fishing apparatus that was made of wood from the punt was to Johnson the work of half a minute, and these he mercilessly split, and then cut into small pieces. Next,

clearing some of the snow from the ground, he laid the foundation of the fire, which he contrived to kindle with various playbills and odd leaves of periodicals from the depths of the pockets pertaining to his wrapper, finally using the lining of his hat for the same purpose. The flame crept from one piece to another, driving out the angry and hissing sap, until the whole was in a blaze; and then Morris bent down before it, and endeavoured to draw fresh energy from the warmth.

"Now take some brandy," said Jack, "and make yourself comfortable; you will soon be all right. For my part, I shall try a few gymnastics."

And he began violently to belabour himself with both arms, after the manner of cabmen of languid circulation in the extremities, who have been unemployed for four hours on a frosty night, until he was quite red in the face, and breathless with exertion.

"But what shall we do when the fire goes out?" asked his cousin.

"We won't let it go out," replied Jack; "we will burn the old boat first. The outside of the wood is wet, to be sure; but it is covered with pitch, and will soon catch."

"The wind still cuts terribly," said Morris, as he crept closer to the fire. "I wish we could get some shelter from it."

"I wish we could," said Jack; "but I don't know what to say to it. The wind is not like the cold. The cold is a low, pitiful sneak, who can't stand fire at all, and whom you may always drive away if you please; but the wind is rather a queer customer to deal with. Ah! bellow away," he continued, as a blast of more than ordinary force rushed through the trees, and across the ait, whirling some of the incandescent embers into the water; "I don't mind you a bit as far as myself goes."

Whether or not the wind heard this defiance, and felt affronted at it, we cannot say; but certainly it was lulled all of a sudden, as if it had expended its power; and the fire, which had just before stood a chance of being carried away into the river altogether, now burnt up again steadily, and much brighter from the draught.

"What a merry fellow that star is!" resumed Johnson, looking at the clear, frosty sky, in which the constellations were beginning to appear, "and how he still keeps winking through it all! I wonder who he is?"

"I can't inform you," returned Morris, vacantly. "I was thinking of something else at the minute."

"Well, don't think of something else, then," returned Johnson, who kept talking upon whatever idea came first, to keep up his cousin's spirits as well as his own. "Look at the stars and think of them--you cannot help doing so if you watch them."

"I have both thought about and watched them enough since I left London," returned his cousin, "and often traced out some particular one that I imagined had some connection with my own being."

As he spoke, the star to which Johnson had alluded shot half way across the sky, and then disappeared.

"Well, that's a jump, however!" said Jack. "If stars are

worlds, how awfully those shots must astonish the inhabitants! I wonder what that means?”

“My fate,” replied Morris. “I shall fall as that star has fallen, and then all will be darkness and oblivion.”

“Nonsense!” said Jack. “Have a pipe.”

Again diving into the secret recesses of his *paletôt*, Johnson produced his thin tobacco-box, which, as he offered it to his cousin, afforded him a fresh subject for much interesting conversation, as to how he had knocked it off the middle stick at Moulsey races, in company with a pincushion, seven apples inside one another, a snake, a pear full of tea-things, and a Japan box containing dirt with a sovereign soldered to the lid; with a passing allusion to the two-bladed cast-iron knife which fell in the hole, in return for which the two next sticks hit the man’s head and shins by accident. Next he procured some more fuel from the punt, and heaped it on to the fire; and finally, clearing away the snow, with the assistance of a landing-net, lay down as close to the blaze as was convenient, and began to smoke, in company with his cousin.

An hour or two passed on, the progress of time being marked by the bell of Laleham Church, which sounded clearly through the silent night, followed by the chimes from the other villages, more or less distinct in proportion to their distance. It was now midnight, and the wind had abated; while the moon, at present in her first quarter, had risen, and was throwing her cold, faint light over the glistening river, and the desolate tracts of ground on either side. The fire had diminished into a heap of glowing embers; and Johnson, still reclining at its side, with his back against the tree, wearied by his exertions, and drowsy from the cold, had allowed himself to fall into a fitful doze, although his last speech had been a caution to Morris not to give way to the slightest feeling of drowsiness. From this troubled slumber he was, however, aroused by his cousin, who seized him suddenly by the arm, and shaking him with nervous trepidation, uttered, in a low, alarmed voice—

“Jack! see! there is something moving on the bank of the river! What can it be?”

Rubbing his eyes, and hurriedly collecting his ideas, Johnson looked in the direction pointed out by his cousin. He could plainly perceive the outline of a human figure moving apparently between the bank and the water, not as if it were walking, but with a uniform gliding progress. Presently it left the shore, and advanced slowly into the stream of the smaller river, and when it had reached the centre, it bent forward, as if gazing intently upon the deep gurgling waters.

“Heavens and earth!” muttered Johnson, scarcely breathing, “what is this?”

“It is an apparition!” whispered Morris, clutching Johnson’s arm in an agony of terror, until his nails nearly penetrated the flesh.

“I never believed in ghosts,” returned Johnson; “but this looks more like one than anything I ever imagined. Hist! see what it is about.”

The figure, still bending towards the river, extended its arms, and apparently drew from the depths a dark form, bearing the indistinct outline of a human body. This it regarded for some seconds with fixed attention, and then moved again on the surface of the current, in the direction of the ait, dragging the other object after it.

"It is coming upon us!" cried Morris, as the dark outline approached nearer and nearer. "Jack! save me!" he continued, in an extremity of fear, as he sank down behind his cousin. "I cannot bear to look at it!"

"It's all as right as twenty trivets, my young swanhoppers!" exclaimed a voice which Johnson immediately recognised as belonging to Spriggy Smithers, who directly afterwards jumped ashore from a very unsafe water-conveyance, bearing some resemblance to a square washing-tub.

"Smithers!" cried both of the cousins, in amazement.

"The werry identical," replied their acquaintance; who else did you suppose it was?"

A few words explained everything. Spriggy's "pardner"—an important personage in all rural firms for the propagation of poaching—having business to transact in the Abbey river, with respect to certain night-lines, had observed the fire on the ait, and communicated the result of his survey to his friend upon reaching his house. Smithers had immediately started off in a light boat of his own construction, used for crossing flooded meadows in wild-duck shooting; and following the course of various overflowed bourns and water-dykes, had reached the main river by a cutting nearly opposite the islet.

"I expected you had got into some mischief," observed Spriggy, "when I found as you had not taken the punt-pole. It's lucky you landed as you have done."

"I don't think the punt will be of much use again," said Johnson; "but we will make it all square with you."

"And the police?" asked Morris; "where are they?"

"All gone," replied Spriggy. "I swore I'd seen nothing, and know'd nobody noways; so you can come back again in safety to my place for to-night; but I can only put you over one at a time."

"But what did you drag out of the river half-way across?" inquired Johnson.

"Something for supper," replied Spriggy. "A wicker-wheel chuck full of eels."

Carefully entering the frail conveyance, Morris was ferried over the river, and then left, in company with the eel trap, which had caused them so much alarm, whilst Smithers returned for Johnson. The small punt was then concealed in an adjacent ditch; and, under the guidance of their friend, the two fugitives returned to his cottage across the fields, where they rested the remainder of the night. Early the next morning they separated, Johnson returning to Slough with the horse, and Morris going he scarcely knew whither—but in the direction of London—where he felt, after all, the greatest security was to be found.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE GRIMLEYS TRY TO CUT OUT THE LEDBURYS ; AND GET UP PRIVATE THEATRICALS.

EVER since the awkward termination of the attempt on the part of the boy in buttons to gain information as to what was going on in the supper-room on the night of the party at Ledbury's, the Grimleys had been exceedingly anxious to distinguish themselves in the eyes of the society of Islington, from a double motive of jealousy and revenge—jealousy, because everybody had been saying what a very pleasant evening they passed ; and revenge, on account of the page's new green trousers, which had been perfectly spoilt by the mixture of barley-sugar, lamp-oil, and trifle, that he fell amongst. And so they held a family council, to devise the best means of diverting the popular attention from their next-door neighbours.

As is usual upon such occasions, the bickerings between the rival houses were generally confined to the female branches of the families ; for old Ledbury and Mr. Grimley senior were exceedingly good friends, usually returning from town together, and at all times very amicable and pleasant. But the respective wives of these gentlemen never hit it exactly ; in fact, they disliked one another amazingly ; which was the more remarkable when you witnessed the exceedingly cordial greetings that passed between them if they chanced to meet in a shop or at a small party ; how affectionate were their inquiries after each other's dear girls ! how unkind it was of them not to drop in very often, and bring their work ; how well the young ladies on either side were looking ! and what a very fine little boy Master Ledbury or Master Grimley grew ! All this was so very courteous and friendly ! And then Mrs. Ledbury would go home, and hint it was time Jane Grimley thought of looking about her, for she began to grow very old-maidish ; and Mrs. Grimley would also say what a pity it was someone did not give poor Miss Ledbury a few hints about her dress ; and what an object the poor child, Walter, looked in the frightful plaid cap and tunic he had been stuck into. But, through it all, Miss Grimley was very fond of talking about the period when she went to school with Emma Ledbury ; which, indeed, was the case, although she usually forgot to add that she was just leaving when the other arrived as a very little girl ; and her brother, Mr. Horatio Grimley, who was in a West India merchant's counting-house, had always been accustomed to regard our friend Mr. Ledbury as a simple and harmless nothing, until he came back from France, and created such a sensation in Islington. This altered the sentiments of the other gentleman, who, finding that he could relate nothing about Ramsgate or Herne Bay equal to Ledbury's stories of Paris and the Quartier Latin, forthwith determined at all hazards to go to Boulogne next autumn, even if the trip cost ten pounds !

“ Now, if you are all so anxious to outdo the Ledburys,” observed

Mr. Horatio Grimley, as they promenaded along High Street—we are sorry to say, on a Sunday, after a sermon on humility—“it is of no use giving a mere commonplace evening party to a parcel of dreary people, who will do nothing but sit still round the room, make observations, eat ice, and abuse us all the next day.”

“What do you wish us to attempt, then, Horace?” asked Mrs. Grimley.

“Well, I hardly know. I think something in the tumbling and fireworks line.”

“The idea!” ejaculated Miss Grimley, lowering her parasol to hide her features from the gaze of a very impertinent young gentleman who passed. “Perhaps you would like us to add horsemanship and tight-rope dancing?”

“Certainly,” replied Horatio; “with a sprinkling of fancy dresses and dissolving views; and, perhaps, some artificial sketching.”

“My dears! what nonsense you are talking!” observed Mrs. Grimley.

“Not at all, mother! we wish to be strikingly original. Talking of dissolving views, what do you say to *tableaux*?”

“Table-whats, my love?”

“Don’t you know?” cried Horatio. “You recollect those things we saw at the De Robinsons’, when we sat gaping in the dark for half an hour. Look here? Hamlet and the Ghost!”

Whereon Mr. Grimley seized his sister’s parasol, and threw himself into an attitude on the pavement, to the great horror of the ladies, and equal admiration of a small charity-boy, who was carrying a dish of baked meats to his family.

“And private theatricals, Horry!” cried Miss Grimley with energy, as she recovered her parasol. “I think we could manage private theatricals. There have never been any attempted in Islington; at least, I think not.”

“I see, Jane! famous notion!” replied her brother, catching at it. “Our house is built for them: two drawing-rooms—folding-doors; no end of fun! don’t you think so, mother?”

It must be confessed Mrs. Grimley did not at first see her way very clearly; but overcome by the persuasions of her son and daughter, at length consented to their wishes, having stipulated that the house was not to be knocked about more than absolutely necessary; that they were not to run into any extravagant expenses; and that all the Ledburys should be invited to act—at all events, they were to be asked as visitors.

“Because,” said Mrs. Grimley, “that will show them we are actuated by no petty feelings of jealousy; and at the same time we shall be able to prove to them that our connections are quite as good as theirs! We have a far better pew at church, as it is.”

“We must get together all the presentable people we can, mother,” remarked Horatio.

“My dear!” replied Mrs. Grimley, with much dignity, drawing herself up two inches higher; “who of our acquaintances is *not* presentable?”

“Well—nobody—never mind; only don’t choke up the rooms with a crowd of griffins and pumps, and wet blankets, who——”

“Pray, do not use such language, Horace,” observed Mrs. Grimley, reproachfully. “I cannot think where you pick it up. It is so dreadfully coarse!”

“But dreadfully expressive, because——”

“Hush!” interrupted his sister, “we know what you mean, Horace.”

“Well, but——”

“Yes—there—everything will be quite right, so do not distress yourself,” continued Mrs. Grimley. “I suppose we must ask that Mr. Johnson who pays such attention to Emma Ledbury; or else she will be in the sulks all the evening.”

“Oh! ask him by all means,” said Horatio; “he will be very useful; and give the Morlands a hint to bring their page. We will have all private servants—no five-shilling Hipkinsees, to carry away fowls’ legs in their umbrellas.”

And the party arriving at their door, the conversation for the present dropped.

Three weeks of intense confusion followed, in which the family arrangements of the Grimleys might have been classed under any head but domestic economy. Horatio Grimley determined, with the assistance of a young friend, who was an artist, to paint several scenes for the due effect of the performance; and such a collection of pipkins, gluc-pots, brushes, canvas, and Dutch metal had probably never before been seen; with which they laboured so industriously that, before they had finished, the very dining-room paper had changed its pattern, from constant trial of colours, and looked like one large rainbow out of joint. The invitations had been sent out, and nearly everybody had accepted—in a great measure from the novelty of the entertainment in that part of the world—including all the Ledburys, who came as a “matter of principle.” Indeed, Titus and Jack Johnson had consented to take parts; but Emma preferred being one of the audience. Old Ledbury, too, was fairly talked into attending, although he never failed to speak of it as “all cursed tomfoolery.” Titus consented to act because he was always good-tempered and willing to oblige—notwithstanding that his dramatic powers were rather limited; and Jack took a part solely from the benevolent motive of disliking the Grimleys, and of looking out for the chance of playing any wicked piece of fun that might present itself. He saw perfectly through the object of the display, and determined to upset it if he could. But this, of course, he kept to himself; and in the meantime, to lull suspicion, gave them all the assistance and time he could afford to dispose of, even helping to select and cast the pieces, and draw up the bill; and then got it printed upon regular theatrical paper at a printing-office, which he alone could have found out, in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden. The document—a proof copy of which is, for aught we know, preserved in the museum of the Islington Literary and Scientific Institution, as an illustration of a local custom—was thus worded:—

THEATRE LOYAL, ISLINGTON.

On Tuesday Evening, February—, 184—,

WILL BE PRESENTED THE FAVOURITE COMEDIETTA OF
A LOVER BY PROXY.

HARRY LAWLESS...	Mr. Horatio Grimley.
MR. BROMLEY ...	Mr. Johnson.
MR. PETER BLUSHINGTON ...	Mr. Titus Ledbury.
SQUIB ...	Mr. Simpson.
NIBBS ...	Master Hoddle.
MISS PENELOPE PRUDE ...	Miss Simpson.
KATE BROMLEY ...	Miss Grimley.

To be succeeded by the following

TABLEAUX VIVANTS ;

OF ILLUSTRATIONS OF MINSTRELSY.

1. Woodman, spare that tree.
2. "Off! off!" said the stranger.
3. Kathleen Mavourneen.

The piano accompaniments by Miss Simpson.

The explanations by Mr. Johnson.

The whole to conclude with the burlesque of

NORMA.

NORMA ...	Mr. Horatio Grimley.
ADALGISA ...	Mr. Titus Ledbury.
POLLIO (<i>in Turkish trousers</i>) ...	Miss Grimley.

The scenery by some gentlemen who would GRIEVE to
PUT their skill against anybody else's, but who
are happy to MARSHALL themselves
in the company.

The decorations in imitation of Mr. W. BRADWELL.

The dresses, for one night only, by Mr. NATHAN.

Doors open at half past seven, and the performance will commence
at eight precisely.

Seats in the Dress-circle will be kept all the evening,
provided no one else makes use of them.

Vivant Regina, Princeps, et leurs enfants.

"Well, I think *that* will do," ejaculated Jack Jonnson, as soon as he had written the bill out for the printer.

"Shouldn't you put 'No money returned'?" observed Mr. Horatio Grimley, who always had an amendment to make to everything.

"Quite unnecessary," answered Jack. "All the theatres have left it off; it is impossible to return money that has never been taken. Play-houses now are like the pillows for poor people that old ladies make for fancy fairs—filled with paper. Wonderful collections of autographs the managers might make if they chose!"

"But there must be some money taken at the doors," said Mr. Grimley.

"So there is," replied Jack, "by pickpockets, cabmen and orange-women. And, if there are any receipts, the management and authors are none the better for them."

"Why not?" inquired Horatio.

"Because they all go, like the coats of the supernumeraries, principally in rents, but not exactly in pieces."



CHAPTER XXIII.

JACK JOHNSON PRODUCES A GREAT SENSATION AT THE PLAY.

At last the parts were learnt and rehearsed, the scenes finished, and the stage erected, with the assistance of two carpenters, in the back drawing-room—the front one being appropriated to the audience. The ladies dressed in Miss Grimley's own apartment, or, as she called it, her *bouloir*; because a few Lowther-Arcade smelling bottles and painted jars were disposed about it, together with an "Eve at the Fountain" over her wash-hand stand, two or three little green gilt-edged "Languages of Flowers," and Handbooks of Affections and Passions, on a hanging bookshelf; and a small transfer pair of bellows, with green leather binding, at the side of the fire-place, principally used by her brother, when he obtained admittance, to blow in the eyes of the bullfinch, which resided in a little unfurnished Swiss cottage near the window, and was perpetually picking nothing from a small fancy salt-box supposed to contain seeds, and dragging up thimblefuls of water from a gallipot below. The gentlemen were to make their toilets in the drawing-room, behind the theatre, which occupied only half its depth. Mrs. Grimley's apartment being appropriated to the reception of the lady-visitors' cloaks and bonnets; and Horatio's room, partaking of all the characteristics of single sons' bed-chambers,

being very small, very carelessly appointed, and very near the extreme summit of the house.

"Now, I request, Leonard," said Mrs. Grimley; "when the evening of performance arrived, to the boy in buttons who fell through the ceiling, "I request that you will not keep the street door open. Close it the moment anybody comes in, that the next company may give a fresh knock. It sounds much better in the neighbourhood."

The boy in buttons rapidly pulled a phantom hair from his forehead, in token of obedience and acquiescence.

And let me have no squabbling with Mr. Ledbury's page, if he should come," continued Mrs. Grimley; "I will not allow it—at least this evening. He is a very low boy; and you will gain nothing but insult from quarrelling with him."

Leonard recollected the manner in which he had been kicked back from the next door, and perfectly agreed with his mistress.

The company had all been requested to come to the time, and when the hour of commencing arrived, the rooms were quite full; and Mrs. Grimley cast a look of triumph over her assembled guests, as she thought how very annoying it must be to the Ledburys to see so many eligible people gathered together, including a great number of their own immediate connections. Old Mrs. Hoddle, escorted as usual by her servant and lantern, had ventured in, under the express understanding that there was to be no firing of guns or crackers, which she inseparably connected with all theatrical performances. Her grandson, also, Master William Hoddle, was to perform in the first piece—a tiger to one of the characters—and, in the firm belief that it was the leading part of the evening, the old lady could not let the opportunity escape of witnessing his *debut*, although the character itself would be no novelty to her, as Master Hoddle had already favoured her with fifteen private representations; in all of which, however, she had discovered fresh beauties, possibly from entirely forgetting all the previous ones. Then Mr. Simpson and his eldest sister came also amongst the *corps dramatique*—the two other ladies, still in the light poplins, having placed themselves in the front row to encourage the dramatic members of their family. But the crowning triumph of all was, that not only the Claverlys had arrived, but also the De Robinsons—whose names sounded somewhat familiar to Jack Johnson, and who, at last, he recollected, were friends of the Bernards he had met in the boarding-house on the Boulevards at Paris—had accepted Mrs. Grimley's invitation from the very first. This was so very kind of them; for Eaton Place is not within a mere stone's throw of Islington; and they had not come alone merely, but brought such an elegant young man with them, with mustachios and a lace front to his shirt, and white gloves and glazed boots and embroidered wristbands turned up over his cuffs, whom young De Robinson had met at some aquatic dinner, and who was introduced as Mr. Roderick Doo.

The orchestra, which comprised Miss Simpson on the cabinet-piano, behind the scenes, and Mr. Ledbury, who had brought his flute, began the overture to *Zampa*, during the performance of which Mr. Ledbury put on his spectacles, and came in where he could, which was not

always in the right place. This was, however, of no great consequence; for the music was drowned by the buzz of the audience. But, although not listening very attentively, the company were not blind; and they admired every part of the proscenium with the most lavish expressions of approbation, from the painted pilasters at the sides, between which were delineated private boxes, with elegant ladies, in tall feathers, looking at the play, and limned with matchless skill, after the valuable original of “West’s Improved Penny Stage-front, to be used either built or plain,” to the green drugget of the dining-room, which had been taken up, thoroughly beaten, and promoted to the office of drop-scene. Mrs Grimley kindly undertook to prompt, as the performers were not all very perfect; and the two old gentlemen of the respective families retired quite behind everyone else, in a corner of the room, where they could slip out unperceived when they got tired of the exhibition, which, in their opinion, did not appear to answer any great commercial end, and was consequently all fiddle-faddle nonsense.

The curtain rose, and discovered Master Hoddle, as Nibbs, laying the breakfast, upon which the applause was very encouraging; and old Mrs. Hoddle told everybody it was her grandson, and that he was not much past eleven. But when Mr. Ledbury put his head out of the bedroom door—an ingenious piece of scenic mechanism, formed from the clothes-horse, covered with canvas and painted—in his white cotton night-cap and dressing-gown, the audience so laughed that Mrs. Grimley, behind the scenes, began to wish they would keep some of their expressions of delight for her own son. And then Mrs. Ledbury leant over three rows of people, to ask Emma if Titus did not do it very well; and Master Walter Ledbury, who had been permitted to come, under heavy threats of punishment for misbehaviour, exclaimed—

“That’s Titus; and I know what he said.”

“What was it, my love?” asked Mrs. Ledbury, with all a mother’s fondness for drawing out her children, looking round upon the company with an expression that conveyed the words, “Isn’t he a dear little child?”

“I shan’t tell—but I know,” replied Walter.

“Yes—now do, Watty dear,” said Mrs. Ledbury, persuasively.

“He said he wasn’t half so ugly as Mrs. Grimley would be in *her* nightcap,” said that young gentleman, with singular distinctness of articulation.

Fortunately, there was a little noise upon the stage connected with the scene, and the remark was not generally heard; nevertheless, Mrs. Ledbury, overcome with confusion, inwardly came to the conclusion that it was a bad plan to press children to say anything before company which they appeared, with all the nature of a child’s art, anxious to keep to themselves.

The farce proceeded, Jack Johnson and Horatio Grimley both coming in for their due share of applause, although the former had been forced into the part somewhat against his will, for which he meant to be revenged. And Miss Grimley and Miss Simpson were pronounced

exceedingly clever, only the last-named young lady could not make up her mind to look at the audience, but addressed all her remarks either to the carpet or the back-scenes.

We must do Mrs. Grimley the justice to say that she prompted remarkably well—if anything, it was a little too loud; and as she had to be giving constant directions to the page concerning sundry points connected with the refreshment portion of the entertainment, she sometimes mingled them very curiously together, in the following style, which it must be premised, was distinctly heard by the audience.

“(My first brief shall be in the court of love)—tell Susan the company will be down almost immediately—(it is the most awkward)—here are the keys—(position I ever felt myself in) and keep the front door closed, do you hear Leonard?—(Speak, my angel)—and let Mrs. Claverly’s servant keep in the room—(he’s very mad—further gone than I thought he was)—the rout-cakes are in the chiffonière, with—(Blushington, in the nearest horse-pond).”

At length the piece concluded, and the curtain fell, not, however, before it had refused to drop for two or three minutes, during which time all the characters were upon the stage, bowing to the audience. At last it came down with a run that made all the footlights jump from the ground, and much alarmed Mrs. Huddle, who, notwithstanding, thought it part of the entertainment. The company generally went down for refreshment; and the performers took advantage of the *entr’acte* to prepare for the next feature in the evening’s programme.

In about twenty minutes all was ready; and when the audience had re-assembled, the *Tableaux Vivants* commenced—Miss Simpson taking her place at the piano, and Jack Johnson enacting a sort of exhibitor in front of the stage. The lights were partially extinguished, and then, whilst the air was played, the curtain rose slowly, and discovered a large frame of fine gauze, to give a pictorial effect to the groupings, which took place behind it. The first *tableau* introduced Miss Grimley dressed in an elegant walking costume, from a late fashion in the *Illustrated News*, addressing her brother, who was attired as a theatrical wood-cutter, and was about to commit some savage injury with a tin axe upon a pasteboard oak at his side. The performers maintained a fixed attitude, which was very imposing—“quite a picture,” as Mrs. Claverly remarked—only Mr. Grimley somewhat disturbed the illusion by sneezing two or three times in the course of the representation.

“*Tableau* the first,” said Jack Johnson, pompously speaking “through the music,” and looking wickedly at Emma Ledbury, “‘Woodman, spare that tree.’ The young lady is requesting the rustic to abstain from injuring a single ramification; and while she confesses that it sheltered her when she was younger, she expresses her determination to afford it every protection at the present moment. The tree derives some additional interest from the circumstance of her ancestor’s having deposited it in its present eligible situation, and she therefore resolutely declares that the implement of the rustic shall do it no harm. Observe the countenance of the woodman—he receives

twelve shillings a week from his employer to do his bidding; and as the oak is the property of his master, and not the young lady's, he is undecided how to act. Let us hope that the tree may be ultimately spared."

The curtain now once more descended to slow music and the applause of the audience, who were left to amuse themselves in the dark, as they best might, for the next ten minutes, whilst the second picture was put upon the stage. Miss Simpson beguiled the time, however, by playing various waltzes; and then the bell rang, and the green drugget rolled up again. The next *tableau* was very imposing. The lights were turned down, and a long piece of canvas, painted blue, and white, and green—in fact, all colours at once—was shaken violently at either end by Master Huddle and Mr. Horatio Grimley, and made to portray the sea during a violent storm, with no end of dust. Walter Ledbury's little chaise had been fitted up to represent a boat by crafty mechanical appliances, and in this frail conveyance were stationed Miss Grimley and Mr. Ledbury. Miss Grimley had changed her dress, and was now attired in white muslin, with a long gauze scarf, which was artfully kept in a semicircle over her head by a piece of cane, to give it the appearance of being extended by the wind. Mr. Ledbury was arrayed as a troubadour, steering the vessel with one hand, and playing the guitar with the other, as he looked with tender affection at Miss Grimley.

"*Tableau* the second," said Jack Johnson, who resumed his post in front. "'*Off! off!* said the stranger!' The lady has forsaken her palace and halls, and is now flying over the silvery but tempestuous bay in a light bark. The young roving lovers have pledged their vows unknown to mortals, but hallowed—there!"

And here Jack Johnson pointed mysteriously to the ceiling, whither everybody's eyes directly followed him. At the same moment the boy in buttons violently shook a piece of sheet-iron behind the scenes, borrowed from the tinman, to represent thunder.

"She is Italy's daughter," continued Jack, with simple pathos. "You may know it by my asking, 'Do you see anything in her eye?' You see a beam—the same bright beam by which the sky of her country is illumined. She is sorrowful at quitting her friends; but the troubadour touches his guitar gaily, and all is happiness!"

The young ladies were much affected at this picture; but when the light bark moved on upon the concealed wheels of the chaise, and was pulled out of sight, the applause was very great, and this triumph of machinery served for the audience to comment upon until the next group was arranged. When the veil was next drawn aside, a landscape was shown, very fairly painted, with a cottage and mountains. Mr. Horatio Grimley was in the centre, dressed in a bright green cut-away coat, a scarlet vest, yellow knee-breeches, blue stockings, and a shillelagh in one hand pointing to the cottage window, the other being laid upon his heart. The lamps, dark at first, were very gradually turned up, and Mr. Ledbury was sent out upon the landing to blow a horn, first with the door open, and then with it shut, to produce an echo.

“*Tableau* the third,” recommenced Jack Johnson, “‘*Kathleen Mavourneen*.’ The scene represents the Lakes of Killarney; and you will perceive the grey dawn is breaking”—(*aside to the page*, “Turn down the middle lamp; it has gone out, and is smelling”)—“the grey dawn is breaking; whilst on the distant hills we hear the horn of the happy hunter. He appeals to his mistress, who is reposing in the cottage. He is surprised to find that she is slumbering still!”

Mr. Ledbury here quitted the staircase, and having taken up a stuffed bird, suspended to the end of a fishing-rod, dipped it in water and then moved it about the scene; of course concealing the rod from the audience.

“Observe the lark,” continued Jack; “he is shaking the bright dew from his light wing, to convey the idea of morning. The voice of Dermot’s heart is only waiting to make a hasty toilet before she appears at the casement to obey the spell that hangs over his numbers. They are about to part,” said Jack, in saddened tone; “it may be for years—it may be for ever! This group, ladies and gentleman, concludes the *tableaux*.”

The series having finished, amidst the unanimous approbation of the spectators, Miss Grimley, who had changed her dress during the last picture, proceeded to sing *Giorno d’orrore* with Miss Simpson, which, after two false starts and a great many variations, was brought to a conclusion to the extreme satisfaction of the audience, who were again left to amuse one another during the preparation for *Norma*. Mrs. Grimley now came in front, to see the burlesque and receive the congratulations of the audience; and Mr. Roderick Doo, who appeared to be what the ladies term “an agreeable rattle,” was so very complimentary and entertaining that the De Robinsons were not at all fatigued with waiting. He had addressed two or three of his gallant speeches to Emma Ledbury, who was sitting immediately before him; but finding they did not create the sensation he anticipated, or raise the feeling of wonder at his talents which he imagined to be due to him, he turned his polite attentions and lively compliments elsewhere.

It was at this period of the entertainment that Jack Johnson, who had been dying all the evening to play off some practical joke upon the Grimleys, hit upon a scheme which appeared likely to gratify his most ardent wishes. We have stated that the back of the drawing-room had been appropriated for the gentlemen to dress in; and as soon as the curtain fell, the intervening scenery was always rolled up, so that they might have the benefit of the lights upon the stage.

As Johnson was to enact the Moon in the first part of the burlesque, the task of drawing up the curtain was assigned to the page by Mr. Horatio Grimley, with strict injunctions that he should be very attentive, and pull the drop up as quickly as he could when he heard the *second* bell ring. Useful Miss Simpson was to play an overture in her high priest’s dress, having directly afterwards to appear as Orovoso; and Master Huddle was to assist the gentlemen in making their toilets.

Understanding all this, Jack saw that if he quietly rang the bell

once himself, the regular first signal would become the second; and as the boy in buttons had received such impressive commands to be attentive, the curtain would most probably go up at once. He therefore took the bell, and indulged in a quiet solo upon it, close to the page's ear.

"What is the bell ringing for?" cried Mr. Horatio Grimley; "we are not ready yet."

"Nothing—nothing!" returned Jack. "I brushed against it just this minute. Now, then, for the Moon."

"Had we not better let down the scene?" asked Mr. Ledbury, who was attiring himself for Adalgisa.

"No, no!" cried Horatio; "it is rather difficult to manage; I must do it myself."

"Hurrah!" thought Jack: "how very fortunate!"

The audience, who had heard the first ring, immediately settled into their places, not sorry to find that the performances were about to recommence. Mrs. Grimley was all eager anticipation to see how the stage looked from the front, and was nervously awaiting the commencement: whilst the "agreeable rattle," having for the time exhausted all his clever speeches, was flirting with Miss De Robinson's handkerchief, admiring its embroidered border, and waving it about to diffuse its scent of *pachouli* all over the room. At this moment, by Mr. Horatio Grimley's directions, the bell rang for the overture. The boy in buttons, who had been attentively waiting for the signal, immediately seized the cord, and with all the activity he could command, rapidly drew up the curtain; and the following *tableau*, far more animated than any before exhibited, burst upon the bewildered eyes of the audience, at the back of the stage:—

On the left hand, Mr. Ledbury, half attired in his costume, was endeavouring to make out which was the front of the wig allotted to him for the character he had to assume, as he stood before a small looking-glass, propped up by a plaster Joan of Arc. Mr. Horatio Grimley, on the opposite side, as Norma, was hurriedly shaving off his whiskers, having discovered at the last moment that he could not very well conceal them; and in the centre, Jack Johnson, as the Moon, having anticipated the occurrence, was deeply engaged in discussing part of a tankard of half-and-half which had been kept in the "green-room" for the refreshment of the gentlemen. Little Master Huddle, who was to play one of the children, was sitting on the ground in an extreme undress, waiting for his sandals, which were having strings put to them up-stairs, and embracing his knees with his hands, in the attitude of little boys on the banks of the river, asking their swimming companions whether the water is warm or no; whilst the floor was covered with boots, coats, hats, and properties, strewn carelessly about in every direction.

The audience, at first conceiving this scene to be part of the play, commenced applauding very vigorously. And when Mr. Horatio Grimley, scared at the sudden and almost pantomimic effect, threw down his razor, and rushing from his position to the prompt wing, seized the hapless boy in buttons, and dragging him from the seclusion of the

side-scenes, commenced bestowing a hearty cutting upon him, in the eyes of the spectators, their delight knew no bounds; and they laughed and cheered with such rapture that the drops of the chandelier quite quivered again. But when Mrs. Grimley started from her place amongst the audience, and stepping over the footlights, drew the page away, crying "Horace! my dear Horace! pray govern your temper!" the visitors began to think that something was amiss—a supposition that was strengthened by the sudden fall of the curtain, and a continued altercation of loud and angry voices behind the scenes. All which combination of various excitements bewildered everybody except Emma Ledbury, who, truth to tell, more than suspected the originator of the mischief; and threw Mrs. Huddle into several gentle fits of temporary paralysis, coupled with much agony of mind as to the fate of her darling little William in the general uproar.

In a short time something like order was obtained, and the overture commenced in reality. But Jack Johnson had gained his end, and the burlesque was comparatively a failure. Mr. Horatio never made an attempt at being funny, but went through his part in angry gloom. Mr. Ledbury's nerves had been so shattered that he broke down twice in the duet, which was to be the *cheval de bataille* of the evening; and Miss Grimley's Pollio lost a great deal of its interest from being played in Turkish trousers—the proper costume of the pro-consul not exactly agreeing with her mamma's or her own ideas of decorum. She looked something like Selim in "Blue Beard," after he had been on a short visit to a friend in Rome. The audience, also, not witnessing any situation half so comic as the one they had just seen, were proportionately flat; and altogether it seemed to be a great relief to everybody when the performances concluded.

There was a very excellent supper, however, which somewhat brought things round again; and the performers, having changed their dresses, now mingled with the company, to receive their congratulations upon the varied talent which they had severally displayed. Jack, it is needless to say, got close to the Ledburys, and made a quiet confession of his mischievous contrivances to Emma, which there was little need of doing in that quarter; and then indulged in a few private remarks upon the arrangements in general that would have made Mrs. Grimley exceedingly comfortable had she heard them.

"Contract supper, I am sure, by the look of it," said Jack to the young lady; "five shillings a head—fragments to be returned."

"You are a most pleasant guest," observed Emma: "especially when your dispositions are so friendly towards the family who ask you."

"I wish you would take some trifle," interrupted Johnson, energetically.

"Why are you so anxious?" asked Emma.

"Pray do!" returned Jack, very persuasively; "because," he added, in a lower tone, "I want to break up the barley-sugar mouse-trap that contains it. Do let me give you some!"

And, not waiting for a reply, Johnson mercilessly dashed a spoon

through the flagree work, and transferred some of its contents to Emma Ledbury's plate.

"That is not at all good breeding, and very mischievous," said Emma; and she looked very much as if she thought so.

"I do it at all contract suppers, as a matter of principle," replied Jack; or else the same things get forwarded to the next people who give a party. I think I have told you about the sponge-cake elephant I knew formerly."

Miss Ledbury confessed her ignorance of the anecdote in question.

"Well then," continued Jack, "I saw him for a long time in a pastrycook's window at the West End, and met him one night at a party in Cadogan Place. I knew him by the fly-speck on his trunk. Nobody cut him; and he was next seen at a wedding-breakfast in Torrington Square."

"Oh! Mr. Johnson, you are in joke!" cried Emma, laughing.

"Fact, I can assure you," returned Jack, gravely. "Well, he travelled about to various parties I chanced to be at, in all parts of London, until I got so tired of him that, one night at a *soirée* in Oxford Terrace, I achieved his destruction with a carving-knife. Do you know he tasted just like a piece of pumice-stone."

"What a very singular anecdote, Jack!" observed Mr. Ledbury, who had been attentively listening.

"It is, certainly," replied Jack. "And I know a hedgehog now who has had a tolerably long spell of it; but I mean to be down upon him some day. I am sure he must be gradually turning into petrified sponge."

"Mr. Johnson," drawled out Mr. Roderick Doo, "I shall have much pleashar in taking a little wine with you."

Jack expressed the happiness he should feel at such a ceremony, and filled his glass.

"I think I have seen you supping at Dubourg's," said Mr. Doo.

"I think you are mistaken," replied Jack, with courteous contradiction.

"Indeed! then where do you generally sup after the opera?"

"Usually outside the pit-door of Drury Lane, in Vinegar Yard," replied Jack: "airy and reasonable: 'ham-sandwich—penny!'"

Mr. Roderick Doo's face assumed a slight expression of disgust as he turned away, and addressed Miss De Robinson. And Jack, seeing the Ledburys about to depart, prepared to accompany them in a most joyous mood; since he never felt so truly happy as when he had lowered any over-refined nobodies by some very commonplace anticlimax. Old Ledbury had, as usual, disappeared some time before, taking little Walter with him; so wishing the Grimleys good night, they returned home together, and sat for some time chatting over the events of the evening, the latter part of which, they all agreed, had passed off to their extreme satisfaction. If what Rochefoucauld remarks be true—we hope, for poor human nature, it is not—that there is some thing not absolutely displeasing to us in the misfortunes of our best friends, how exceedingly comforted we ought to feel when anything extra-disagreeable annoys our enemies.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MR. LEDBURY HAS A VALENTINE ; AND GOES TO THE " ANTEDILUVIANS."

MUCH amusement and instruction, coupled with some valuable hints relative to engaging in the daily struggle for the crust, which influences the majority of our actions—for our labours chiefly tend to the acquirement of the same object, except that in the upper ranks of life it is a rout-cake, and amongst the lower classes a stale half-penny bun, that is contested for—may be picked up by reflective minds whilst watching the manœuvres of the ducks, and other aquatic birds, in the Green Park enclosure. And Mr. Ledbury, who was by nature contemplative, thought so too, as he leant against the iron hurdles of the lake one morning in February, and pondered upon things in general.

It was fine, clear, cold weather : one of those days on which spring and winter, in the midst of their contest, make a temporary peace, and both reign together for a few hours in tranquillity, as if to collect fresh power for the approaching strife. Gentlemen walked quickly about, puffing and blowing, like human locomotives ; small children in Highland costumes felt very cold about their little red legs, but withal capered and frisked in the sunshine—the bright, cheering sunshine, which awakened so many infantile pictures of fields, and the country, and cowslip-chains and puff-aways, when summer should come in again, and they were taken from close noisy London. And young ladies held their veils closely over their faces, and looked down towards their fur boots as they tripped sharply along, feeling conscious that the cold had driven the roses from their cheeks and lips to another feature of their countenance, where a blush is never very becoming ; although the feature itself in the abstract has no small share in perfecting a pretty face.

Mr. Ledbury had walked down from Islington, at a constitutional pace, to transact business for his father at Charing Cross ; and, having accomplished his mission, he inspected the soldiers at the Horse Guards, mentally approved of their appearance : thought what a capital place the top of the Nelson column would be to learn the *ophicleide* upon, because it was out of everybody's way ; and then walked into the park, and mused at his leisure. When he entered the enclosure, there were a great many ducks congregated round the spectators on the banks, in the hope of getting something to eat ; and other birds of quaint and strange appearance as well, some of them so very odd-looking that Mr. Ledbury laughed aloud at their droll expression and demeanour as they walked imposingly about the grass, to the great discomfiture of the alien sparrows who had invaded their domain with predatory intentions. There were several swans also, who evidently thought no small feathers of themselves, by the dauntless manner in which they glided about, stooping with much

dignity to take up the piece of bread thrown to them, but which they seldom laid hold of, as the ducks of inferior manners generally ran in first, and with their short necks gobbled down the desired morsel before the swan's head was half-way to the water.

"Such is life!" thought Mr. Ledbury, quoting the words of the celebrated moralist who publishes his thoughts upon motto-wafers and glass-seals. "We everywhere see true dignity of birth losing those advantages it will not stoop to secure; whilst common grovelling persons, who will cringe to anything, readily appropriate the rewards to themselves."

And when, during these meditations, an awful-looking bird, with red legs, and a knob over his bill as big as an orange, and of the same colour, came up with the velocity of a steamboat, and put the ducks to flight, Mr. Ledbury thought of retributive justice, and set the last bird down as a feudal baron: until he ate the next piece of bread himself; and then Mr. Ledbury felt convinced that he was a lawyer. And, finally, his reflections took a gastronomic turn, and he pictured some of the more desirable birds cooked and smoking-hot, about to be anointed with cayenne pepper and lemon-juice.

But these were not the only meditations that occupied Mr. Ledbury's mind; for he had that morning received a communication which baffled all his conjectures to discover whom it came from; the missive being a valentine, in a lady's handwriting, and perfectly anonymous. He had read and re-perused it a hundred times, but could form no notion of the writer, which was the more to be regretted because it was very delicate and complimentary; not an abusive representation of a monkey with long hair, smoking a cigar, accompanied by verses having for their object the production of mental inquietude; or a policeman with knock-knees and a red nose; or a dandy with a donkey's head; but a beautiful lithograph, with a lace border and allegorical illustrations. In the centre a handsome gentleman, on whose face some other artist had lightly sketched a pair of spectacles, to represent Mr. Ledbury, was kneeling in an attitude of adoration, attired in a blue coat, curled hair, white trousers, and very little boots. Then an equally elegant lady was receiving his addresses with her face half averted, as she looked towards a distant village, or rather a very small hamlet, being composed of a church steeple, two trees, and a hackney coach. And, besides a great many Cupids—who appeared to be flying home, and with no end of hearts, of the usual imaginative form, in all probability to be stuffed and eaten for their supper, if love ever eats—there were some original verses, of great ingenuity and power, by some one who had evidently read, and taken as models of style and composition, the most popular poets who adorn the advertisement division of our newspapers at the present day. It was an acrostic, and thus it ran:—

"T oo gentle youth! my young heart's tendrils twine
I n clinging fondness round my love's first shrine.
T rust in my truth, and let me call thee mine.
U nknown to all, in solitude I pine,
S till thinking but on thee, my VALENTINE!"

This was very nicely written, and enclosed in a fragrant envelope, which was, moreover, fastened by a wafer, bearing, as Mr. Ledbury imagined, the crest of the writer, by which he argued that she must be of gentle birth. The heraldic bearings were a mouse-trap *proper* upon a ground *rainbow*, with the motto "Inquire within;" but, beyond this, there was no clue to the author. Mr. Ledbury walked about the park for a full hour, without arriving at any certain conclusion, and finally agreed to inspect some authentic work upon heraldry, and see if that could afford him any information. He would, of course, have consulted the omniscient Jack Johnson upon the subject, but he had called several times upon his friend without finding him at home; and, indeed, had lately remarked, with some uneasiness, that Jack appeared to have something unpleasant hanging over him. Since the play at Grimley's, when the excitement had carried him into all manner of fun, they had not seen much of him at Islington; and when Emma had written him a note with her own fair hand, to ask him up one evening, he had declined the invitation, upon the plea of previous engagement. It was so unlike Jack Johnson to decline an invitation, under any circumstances, that Emma was sure something was the matter.

So Mr. Ledbury was completely puzzled: and even the book of heraldry afforded him no information; for he could not find that any peer, baronet, or commoner of England had a mouse-trap for his crest. And, as his first feeling upon reading his valentine was one of gratification at the compliment, so his next partook of investigation as to the originator of it; and, by the time he got home, being still as much in the dark as ever, these two sentiments had merged into irritation contingent upon ungratified curiosity; and he finally put down valentines as exceedingly stupid things, void of all intellect, and only tolerated by weak and ill-regulated minds.

The next morning, however, whilst Mrs. Ledbury was standing in the passage, directing some arrangements for suspending a lamp therein, there came such a sharp double rap at the door, that she did not recover from the shock all day; and directly afterwards the postman gave in a letter for Titus. Mr. Ledbury was astonished to see that the direction was in the same writing as his valentine, and much more bewildered when a printed card made its appearance upon opening the envelope, which he did with a tremulous and expectant hand, inviting him to a ball at the Hanover Square Rooms; the card being a voucher from the "Antediluvians," conveying also the information that gentlemen could not be admitted unless in fancy costume, and that it was customary to pay half-a-guinea for the tickets.

The hope of discovering his unknown *inamorata* was a sufficient inducement for Mr. Ledbury to make up his mind at once that he would go, in spite of all the objections of the old gentleman, who indulged gratuitously in a great many pleasing comments upon fancy balls and dresses—not that he had ever been to one in his life, but he looked upon them as a species of May-day dance in respectable society; being enabled to form a slight notion of the entertainment from a vague recollection of the ball scene in "Gustavus," which he

had seen one night, when he was dragged to the theatre considerably against his will. But Titus thought differently, and was already absorbed in the choice of a dress, passing every costume he was acquainted with rapidly before his mind, and picturing the sensation he should create in each. It may be conceived that his choice finally rested upon a *débardeur*, such being the character which he had so ably sustained at the *bal masqué* in Paris, when pretty Aimée accompanied him in the same lively dress. And, moreover, he found that a good costume was not to be obtained under three or four guineas, whilst for less than that sum he could get it made at home : for Mrs. Ledbury knew a cunning woman, skilled in the needle, who came for a shilling a day and her meals, and could contrive window-curtains, chair-covers, bed-furniture, and pinafores in a manner marvellous to behold ; and to her the manufacture of the dress was entrusted, from Mr. Ledbury's own designs. And, considering her ideas of Parisian life were rather limited—that she did not even know what station in life a *débardeur* was supposed to fill—she acquitted herself with very great credit. But, having to outfit little Master Hoddle, a day or two after, for an academy at Clapton, she described every part of her late undertaking so very minutely, that in the course of eight-and-forty hours everybody in Islington, not to mention the frontiers of Pentonville, was aware that Mr. Ledbury was going to a fancy-ball in a most singular dress ; and, moreover, perfectly conversant with the dinner *carte* of the family every day the workwoman had stopped there.

At length the evening arrived ; and when Titus was dressed he came down into the parlour, to the great admiration of everybody, except old Mr. Ledbury, who contented himself with several quiet “yahs !” and “tom-fools !” as he looked over his newspaper at his son. Mrs. Hoddle had begged to be permitted to come in and see Titus before he started, as a great favour ; because everybody called upon Mrs. Hoddle every day for the news ; and, as she always told the next visitor everything the previous one had said, she became the great promulgator of reports, and general registrar of births, marriages, and other family concerns, for the district. Indeed, Jack Johnson, when he became acquainted with her, had christened her the “Islington Chronicle and Hoxton Evening Mail” ; and this he wickedly told to Emma Ledbury, who said it was very sarcastic of him, but laughed, and thought it very funny, nevertheless.

Titus had the gratification of seeing the Grimleys peeping at him at the side of the blinds as he got into the cab ; but, of course, he pretended not to observe them, and drew up the window in a dignified manner ; then, throwing himself back with as much ease as his dress would allow, gave himself up during the journey to surmise, curiosity, and anticipation.

There were a great many carriages at the rooms when he arrived at Hanover Square, and he was some time getting up to the door, during which space impertinent loiterers without end amused themselves by peeping into the cab. But at last he bounded out of his vehicle, amidst an escort of policemen and the cheers of the spectators ; and, delivering his ticket to a gentleman in a powdered wig and

court-suit, who looked very pleasant and amiable, skipped upstairs with much activity, and entered the ball-room. The majority of the company had arrived, and certainly the scene was very animated; for every gentleman was in costume, as well as the greater part of the ladies; whilst there were not the crowds of military men and Greeks with which fancy-balls are usually overdone. Not knowing anybody, Mr. Ledbury, for the first quarter-of-an-hour, felt rather awkward, and imagined that everybody was staring at him alone. But when one of the stewards, of imposing appearance, who looked as if he had walked off one of the tombstones in the Temple Church, came up, and very courteously introduced him to a partner, he was completely reassured, and entered into the quadrille very spiritedly with a pretty Albanian in a pink satin skirt, who made him known to her sister, a pretty Albanian in a pink satin skirt also, and procured him the honour of her hand for the next dance.

But through all the excitement of the scene and the music, coupled with the pleasant small talk of the quadrille, Mr. Ledbury could not cease from wondering if the writer of the valentine was present, and why she had sent the ticket; for it evidently came from the same quarter. And so much did his curiosity increase, that, fearful he might be overlooked in the throng of the ball-room, he left off dancing after a time, and went upstairs into the royal box, where he sat and contemplated the gay spectacle below.

"How are you? how are you?" said a very affected voice as he advanced to the front of the gallery.

"I hope you are well, sir," returned Mr. Ledbury, very politely, somewhat awed by the gentleman who addressed him, and who was attired in a most magnificent court-dress of once-upon-a-time, with a dagger and feathers.

"I think I had the pleasure of being permitted to witness your admirable performance at Mr. Grimley's," observed the stranger, most melliflously. "My name is Doo, sir—Mr. Roderick Doo."

"Oh! indeed," said Mr. Ledbury. "I did not recognise you in your dress. It is very handsome."

"This dress, Mr. Ledbury," replied the other, "belongs to my friend, Lord Swindle. It is worth seven hundred guineas, and was made for George the Fourth."

Mr. Ledbury felt delighted to make the acquaintance of a gentleman who had such high connections.

"Have you ever been here before?" asked Mr. Roderick Doo.

"Never," returned Titus.

"Nor have I," continued the other, with a patronising air. "It is not exactly the sort of place I should wish to be seen at: but it is proper for a man of the world to witness all phases of society. Your costume is minutely correct. What is it?"

"A *débardeur*," answered Ledbury. "Do you know Paris?"

"Oh! yes, yes—perfectly," replied Mr. Doo, in an off-hand manner; "that is—I may say—yes."

"Which part did you live in?" inquired Titus.

"Oh! generally generally—no particular part—all over. Ah!

How d'ye do?—how d'ye do?” he continued, shaking his head to an indefinite nothing on the stairs. “Excuse me—see a friend—capital dress that of yours of the *day boarder*—so like the French schools. I shall see you at supper.”

And, as if afraid he should be inveigled into comparing notes about Paris and the Parisians with Mr. Ledbury, Mr. Roderick Doo hurried off to meet his invisible acquaintance, leaving Titus once more to his own reflections.

Several more quadrilles and waltzes passed with indomitable energy on the part of the company; and at length the orchestra performed a grand march, whereupon the whole of the assembly began walking with a martial air round and round the room. Observing, from the programme of the dances delivered to him upon entering, that it was now supper-time, Mr. Ledbury descended to the ball-room, and, leaning against the door, had an opportunity of inspecting everybody as they went down, in the hopes of discovering his unknown fair. A great many costumes passed, worn by entire strangers; and Mr. Ledbury was about giving up the investigation in despair, when a young *contadina*, with such a pair of mischievous eyes, who was hanging on the arm of a Francis the First, looked Mr. Ledbury through and through, and finally bowed to him. Titus immediately returned the salute with flurried courtesy, and when the young lady held out her hand towards him, and said, “How do you do, Mr. Ledbury?” he was perfectly bewildered.

“You do not recollect me in this dress,” observed the *belle* laughing. “Perhaps you remember this fan?”

And she now exhibited to Mr. Ledbury the fan which he had mended and taken home the morning after the party at his house, previously to his calling upon Jack Johnson.

“Miss Seymour!” cried Mr. Ledbury, joyfully, as he recognised a friend of his sister’s. “I really did not anticipate the pleasure of seeing you here.”

“Nor myself either, I suppose, Titus?” said the Francis the First, who proved to be the young lady’s brother. “We saw you, though, up in the box, and should have come and spoken to you, only we were always engaged. Besides, we did not arrive until very late.”

“Will you sit by us at supper, Mr. Ledbury?” asked Miss Seymour, in such winning tones, that there was no chance of refusal.

“I shall be truly delighted,” replied Titus, as they approached one of the tables.

“This room,” said Mr. Seymour, “with its pillars and looking-glasses, always puts me in mind of dining on board a steamboat, especially when you hear the people overhead. Now then, sit wide; take plenty of room; collar the lobster salad, and begin to feed.”

A very merry portion of the evening’s amusement was the supper. There were plenty of choice eatables, and no lack of excellent wine, which as it circulated, infused fresh spirit and animation into the company; until they paid compliments, and said clever things, and pulled crackers, and laughed with such heartfelt hilarity that it would

have been the best cure a misanthrope could have been subjected to. After supper, they drank "The Queen!" with an innumerable number of times three; and then "The Visitors!" who in turn proposed "The Antediluvians!" to which the head Antediluvian responded, and expressed his pleasure at seeing all those who he knew looking just as well as they did ten years back. Whereupon the pleasant gentleman in the powdered wig, who had taken the tickets upon entrance, said that he must propose "The Ladies!" and he was happy to say that the majority of them not only looked just as well as they did ten years back, but a great deal better. And at this pretty compliment there was such tremendous applause that everything upon the table entered into the revelry, and leapt about for pure joy; whilst one particular trille, that appeared as if hundreds of silkworms who spun barley sugar had been hard at work upon it for many weeks, tumbled all to pieces with the concussion.

Miss Seymour continued to look so bewitching in her *piquante* costume, that by the time supper was over Mr. Ledbury scarcely knew whether he was upon his head or his heels, except that in the former position taking wine would have been rather inconvenient. And when they returned to the ball-room, he danced with her one set after another, until he was positively ashamed to ask her for any more; although her brother—with all their good qualities, brothers are sometimes awfully in the way—was deeply engaged himself in flirting with one of the pretty Albanians in the pink skirt, whom Ledbury had first danced with.

But "Time flies quickly," as we learn from the roundhand copies; and, after getting through a few dozen quadrilles, more or less, and Sir Roger de Coverley as a wind up, the Seymours departed; and, as the light that made life life to Mr. Ledbury had flown, after many emphatic adieus, he prepared to follow their example, since, although one light had gone, another was rapidly coming on. As he was waiting for a cab in the ante-room, his acquaintance, Mr. Roderick Doo, whom he had not seen since the early part of the evening came up to him, and said—

"Ha! Mr. Titus—going? Let me have the pleasure of accompanying you. I am going your way. Let me see—where do you live?"

Mr. Ledbury mildly suggested Islington as the most probable spot to discover his home in.

"Capital!—just do!" continued the other. "I live in Park Village—all in the way you know."

Titus did not exactly see what line of road would make it so; but not knowing very well how to get quit of Mr. Doo, who through it all was amazingly polite, he begged he would get into the cab.

"You must come and see me," said that gentleman as they rode along. "I am sure we shall agree amazingly. My friend, the Baron Escroc—know the Baron Escroc?"

Mr. Ledbury had not the honour.

"Fine fellow! will agree amazingly with you; so will Swindle—all agree amazingly with you."

Mr. Ledbury, half asleep, thanked him for his proffered introductions; and then, in a doze of three minutes, dreamt he was in a post-chariot, by the side of Miss Seymour, with her brother in the rumble. At last the cab stopped at the commencement of Park Village, and Mr. Doo aroused him by a gentle shake.

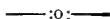
"Sorry to say I must quit you now," observed that gentleman; "but exceedingly obliged to you for the lift."

"You are very welcome," said Titus politely, thinking at the same time that Mr. Doo might just as well have offered to pay a part of the fare. "But you are not going to walk along the road in that dress?"

"Oh! no," replied Roderick, "another cab. Good morning, Mr. Ledbury. I am delighted at having had the pleasure of renewing our acquaintance, You must come and see me, you know—no form: ta! ta!"

And closing the door of the cab, evidently not wishing Ledbury to know where he was going, he shot off in the seven hundred guinea dress, although it was now broad daylight, and was out of sight in an instant.

Mr. Ledbury gave his address to the driver, drew up the windows, and then sank into the corner of the cab fast asleep, in spite of the banging and jolting of the rattling box upon wheels, without springs, which was conveying him. Nor did he awake until the driver pulled up at his door; and then, having paid the fare with the usual altercation attendant upon that ceremony, he went quietly in, in company with the milk, that arrived at the precise moment



CHAPTER XXV.

WHICH IS MORE ESPECIALLY INTERESTING TO JACK JOHNSON AND
EMMA LEDBURY.

FROM time immemorial there has been an imperative necessity in all plays and novels—or, at least, in so great a majority of them that the remaining ones are lost in their own insignificance—for a love-story, or even two or three distinct courtships, to be worked into the plot and form its leading features. And, moreover, it has been ordained in these compositions that, for a love-story to possess any interest, its course must be interrupted by frequent breaks and annoyances, which shall from time to time throw obstacles in the way of the principal characters concerned; in fact, that, instead of being a straightforward, smooth course, as the New Mile on Ascot Heath, it shall be rendered

perplexing and troublesome, like the ground whilome appropriated to steeple-chases at the Hippodrome.

Now it appears, from hourly instances, that the safest-sailing method of composition in literature or art is to follow that rule which has hitherto proved most successful—a plan adopted to admiration by most of the dramatists, musicians, and especially the novelists, of the present day, as every new play, opera, or three-volume story will abundantly testify. And, therefore, we openly avow that this is the line which we ourselves mean to take up; and we confess it at once, to avoid, all animadversions on our conduct in so doing; for the world will always lend itself as a willing accomplice to those peccadilloes which are not sought to be concealed; and having ourselves pleaded guilty to our own charge of plagiarism, no one else will now care to accuse us of it. And so we will proceed to show how sundry obstacles arose to annoy Jack Jackson during the period that he was paying his attentions to Emma Ledbury, although the manner in which the courtship finally ended must for the present remain undivulged to our readers.

Some few days after the events of the last chapter, Mr. and Mrs. Ledbury were sitting alone one evening in the parlour; the old gentleman being engaged, as usual, in perusing the city intelligence of the evening paper; whilst his consort was performing some curious feats of legerdemain with two whalebone sticks and a ball of worsted, from whose united manœuvres the foundation of a triangular shawl was gradually being produced. Titus had gone off with his friend to some theatre, upon the strength of an eleventh-hour order, that had come in unexpectedly; and Emma was sitting in the nursery, to keep the olive-branches from setting themselves on fire or bundling downstairs in the dark, whilst Foster was in the kitchen. Not that such was her usual avocation; but the domestic arrangements of the house had been somewhat disturbed from their propriety by the sudden loss of the boy in buttons, and the advent of another page in embryo.

“Servants are certainly the greatest plagues in housekeeping,” observed Mrs. Ledbury, in a temporary fit of vexation at dropping a stitch.

The old gentleman replied by a motion of his head, something between a shake and a nod, which might have been taken as expressive of anything; for as he had heard the same terms of reproach separately applied by Mrs. Ledbury during the past week to washing, butcher’s bills, and four-and-a-half-gallon tubs of table-ale, he was a little confused as to what was in reality the leading domestic annoyance.

“I hate all boys!” continued Mrs. Ledbury; “you take a great deal of pains to teach them how to lay a cloth, and wait properly; and just as they begin to be useful, and worth their six pounds a year, they leave you for something else.”

“Then, my dear, I would not trouble myself about them any more,” calmly observed Mr. Ledbury.

“And suppose I did not, Mr. Ledbury, what would become of the house? I ask you again, what *would* become of the house?”

Mr. Ledbury, entertaining some peculiar notion that the house would, in all probability, remain where it was, kept silent.

"To think," resumed the lady, "that the Claverlys, who have not been near us for months, should take it into their heads to call to-day!"

"Did they call to-day, my love?" innocently asked the old gentleman.

"*Did* they! Now, Mr. Ledbury, have I not told you so several times before? You are so very absent! And the great oafish lout whom you have chosen to take from the school first kept them at the door until they knocked twice; and then, when they asked if I was at home (I was dressing to go out with Emma), drawled forth, 'Yes, missis is at home; but she's cleaning herself!' What low, common persons you appear to patronise!"

"Hipkius recommended the boy to me as being exceedingly willing and honest," observed Mr. Ledbury.

"That I do not wish to deny," replied his companion; but look at his figure: he is all legs and wings. You will never be able to put him into the clothes that William wore; he would be a perfect sight for the impudent little boys in the street to run after and shout at. Titus wished to bring Mr. Johnson back to supper, too; and I was obliged to make all sorts of signs to him not to press it. But Titus is so slow at taking a hint."

"Perhaps it would all have been as well, my love!" said Mr. Ledbury. "I think he comes here a great deal too often. You must recollect we do not know very much of him; and he pays extraordinary attention to Emma."

"Titus says he is very respectable, my dear," answered his wife; "and I am sure his manners prove him to be so."

For Johnson was one of Mrs. Ledbury's chief favourites, and she always supported him. Indeed, we have generally observed that the suitor of the daughter is more or less befriended by the mother; and the more so by a delicate shade of conjugal diversity, if there is any paternal prejudice against him.

"Marriage now, Mrs. Ledbury," continued her husband, "is a serious thing, and very different to what it used to be in our days. Increased education has given young people increased ideas; and they all want to commence where their parents leave off, with a ready-made income, and everything about them in first-rate order."

"It is very true," replied the lady. "We lived in lodgings when we were first married."

"We did; and where would you find the young people who would do so now?"

After a little more conversation, the old gentleman agreed that he would speak to Jack that very night, in the event of his returning with his son; and then the subject was dropped, as Emma came back from her charge to the parlour, and commenced a highly interesting domestic relation, of which Master Walter Ledbury was the hero, as to how very naughty he had been: how he had buried the baby's barking white French poodle in the coal-scuttle, and then flung his

doll, which now only consisted of the trunk and part of the head, through the nursery window, as well as the skylight of Grimley's kitchen, in a fit of violent passion.

Although neither Mr. nor Mrs. Ledbury was certain that Jack would come back with Titus, yet Emma appeared perfectly conscious that such an event would happen; and, under pretence of seeing that the new boy arranged everything properly, she stepped into the kitchen, and made a few additions to the contents of the tray, which, in all probability, she would not have done for her brother alone, with all her love for him. And then, by divers ingenious manœuvres, she put off the usual time of the meal, singing and playing such airs, in a nice fireside manner, as she thought her father and mother would be unwilling to interrupt; or persuading Mrs. Ledbury, by various indirect allusions, to begin a fresh row of knitting for the shawl, until a knock at the door announced the return of Titus; and she heard Jack's voice as they disposed of their hats and coats in the passage.

They had a very merry supper, for Johnson was in better spirits than he had appeared lately; and Titus was exceedingly jocose, retailing all they had seen, accompanied by what he believed to be a very correct imitation of the various actors, but which put Jack more in mind of Macready with variations. However, as neither his father, mother, nor sister was very conversant with the originals, the effect was equally gratifying; and they laughed at him quite as much as the audience had done at the real performers.

"The cabman who brought us home was a great card," observed Jack, "and amused us immensely. We found out he had been a stage-coachman, knocked up by the combined influence of gin and railways."

"What a strange voice he had!" said Titus.

"Very," continued Jack; "it seemed to come through a rusty nutmeg-grater stuffed with horse-hair. He kept saying to his horse, 'Get along, some o' you!' I thought at first he was addressing the different legs, for they seemed to need a little urging; until he told us that he had been so used to drive four-in-hand, he couldn't get out of the way of it."

Time crept on; and at last the clock on the mantelpiece warned Jack that the usual hour of retiring at Ledbury's had arrived, and he consequently rose to depart. But the old gentleman having intimated that he was anxious for five minutes' conversation with him—with apparent unconcern, as if it was upon some trivial, commonplace subject—the others bade him good-night. Jack shook hands with all of them; first with Mrs. Ledbury, then with Titus, and lastly, with Emma, whose hand he kept in his own nearly twice as long as he had done the others; and when they had gone he drew his chair to the fire at the old gentleman's request, and awaited what he had to say to him, wondering in no small degree what it could be; never for an instant suspecting the true cause, as he flattered himself that nobody could have observed anything unusual between Emma and himself, after the manner of lovers in general, who always imagine their affections are a secret,

until they find that everybody else knows of them as well as, if not better than, themselves.

"Mr. Johnson," said old Ledbury, as soon as the door was closed, and everything was quiet, "I wished to say a few words to you upon a subject which, I have no doubt, is equally important to each of us; and I am sure you will take any question I may ask you in good part. I can assert this from my confidence in your good sense."

"I shall have great pleasure, sir, in hearing what you may have to communicate," replied Jack, very respectfully; but at the same time feeling rather fidgety.

"Well, then," continued the old gentleman, "I am a plain speaker; a long life of commerce and negotiation has taught me the advantage of being so. I ask you to tell me candidly, and honourably, if you are not paying attentions to my daughter?"

Whether it was the reflection of the red table-cover, or the embers of the fire, that suddenly threw such a crimson glow over Jack Johnson's countenance, or whether his own vivid blood rushed up to his face as he started at this unanticipated question, we cannot exactly decide. But we think the latter; for Jack was not addicted to blushing, so that the blood, feeling strange in its new quarters, retreated again with equal rapidity, and left him as pale as he had just before been flushed. And, to use the common phrase, he would have felt his heart in his mouth had not the flurried beating of that organ against his side assured him that it was in its proper place. He hesitated a few moments, and then said—

"You ask me for a candid answer, Mr. Ledbury, and I will give you one. I am attached to your daughter—I trust in a strictly honourable manner; and I have reason to think that——"

"You see, old people see better with their eyes than you would sometimes imagine," interrupted Mr. Ledbury.

"I hope, sir," continued Johnson, earnestly, "that there is no decided objection on your part to the attachment?"

"Now, understand me, Mr. Johnson," continued the old man; "I do not wish to act otherwise towards you than as a gentleman, for your behaviour here, at all times, has exacted that much. But, at the same time, the welfare and happiness of my child must be the first consideration; and if I am anxious to know something of your prospects and pursuits, you must attribute it to no idle curiosity."

Poor Jack! this was a very home question, and he looked at the fire with glistening eyes, vacantly tracing out burning valleys and glowing caverns, in an utter hopelessness of reply, until Mr. Ledbury again requested an answer.

"I confess that at present my prospects are not what I could wish them to be," returned Johnson; "but I am willing—I may say, most anxious—to pursue any employment that may offer."

"I do not doubt you will," observed Mr. Ledbury. "But you must be aware, as well as myself, how many hundred young men there are in London at this present moment—young men of excellent education, connections, and unimpeachable character, with the same

disposition to work—and hardly too—which I believe you to possess. But the difficulty is to find the employment.”

“It is too true!” thought Johnson, with a sigh. And then, after a minute’s pause, he added,—

“I believe you are aware, sir, that I have some little property of my own. It has, hitherto, been sufficient to keep me out of debt.”

“But it would not do to marry upon, Mr. Johnson. The popular error of one mutton-chop being sufficient for two young people has, before this, led to a great deal of misery. Do not think that I wish my daughter to marry a rich man merely on account of his money—very far from it; but it would be my duty to see that he had a sufficient income to support her, independent of whatever she might bring him.”

“What am I to suppose, then, you wish me to do, sir?” asked Johnson, hesitating, as if he expected an unwelcome reply.

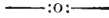
“Simply, for the present, to discontinue your visits to my house,” answered Mr. Ledbury—“at least when Emma is at home. She will be going into the country shortly, and then we shall be happy to see you as usual.”

This was the severest blow of all; and Johnson thought old Mr. Ledbury a hearty savage for the cold, deliberate manner in which he had spoken the last sentence. The tears started to his eyes as he attempted a dozen separate replies, but the words faltered on his lips; and he remained for some minutes apparently stupefied by the old gentleman’s intimation, nervously twitching his handkerchief into all sorts of violent contortions, and finally crumpling it up in his grasp to the size of an egg.

At length, by an effort of self-determination, he rose to depart, unwilling to prolong the conversation any further, but still appearing scarcely alive to the full discomfort of the painful banishment imposed upon him. He would have begged to see Emma once more, to be permitted to write to her, to have his dismissal from her own lips or hand; but the announcement had been so unexpected that the words appeared to choke him. Mr. Ledbury saw his distress, and addressed a few remarks of chilling courtesy to him; but Jack scarcely attended to them, and mechanically wishing him good-night, left the house precipitately, feeling more truly wretched than he had done for many a long day through all his troubles.

The door closed after him with a dreary remorseless sound, and he stood in the flinty, unsympathising street. There was a light in Emma Ledbury’s room, as he looked up towards the windows, and for a time this riveted him to the spot. He walked backwards and forwards before the house, now and then feeling a momentary delight as he saw her shadow pass across the blind, wondering if she thought he was below, and how she would feel upon hearing that he had been forbidden the house. At last the light was extinguished, and all was still but the moaning of the wind, whose melancholy gusts were in perfect consonance with his own thoughts, amongst the half-finished buildings and leafless trees in the vicinity. And then he returned to

his cheerless home, and pondered upon the events of the evening, until, worn out with planning, suggesting, and rejecting schemes for his future career, sometimes of the wildest and most impracticable class, he fell asleep at an early hour in the morning, and for a short period forgot all his vexations in one of those bright dreams which usually attend us—the more vivid as all around us is hopeless and despondent.



CHAPTER XXVI.

THE OLD HOUSE AT KENTISH TOWN.

IN one of the northern suburbs of London, a little to the right of the high road, and within a quarter of an hour's stroll of one of the most bustling thoroughfares in the metropolis, there stands an ancient and dilapidated edifice, of an aspect so melancholy and so ruinous in appearance, that it cannot fail to attract the attention of the most unobservant traveller who passes by. Possibly, in common with all old edifices, it may have its legends or chronicles; but we know nothing of them beyond those immediate points of its history which have reference to our tale.

This old building, as we have mentioned, is situated nearly at the road-side; and from its gables, windows, and general structure, appears in former times to have been a farmhouse or country lodge, at a period when broad pastures and shady lanes were to be found encompassing it on every side, instead of the present comparatively modern elevations. But that time has long gone by—the combined devastations of age and the elements have operated upon its structure with such uncontrolled demolition, that it appears almost as if a ban had been set upon it, forbidding the use of the least exertion in counteracting or repairing the ravages of decay. The brickwork of the walls is crumbling and disjointed, in some parts riven throughout its entire structure; the windows are mere frames of blackened and decaying wood, allowing free entrance to the interior, in mockery of the corroded padlocks still fixed to some of the doors. And the inside of this dreary building is equally dismal. The ceilings have fallen down upon the floors, and the boards themselves have rotted from the joists, and lie about the apartment, sometimes standing out, like the coffin-planks of a teeming burial-ground, from the dirt and rubbish that half cover them. One by one, also, have the stairs broken away, tumbling confusedly one over the other upon the passages beneath, except where a few hang out from the wall, in threatening insecurity, vibrating with every breath of wind that plays through the tenement. The dismantled state of the roof, too, in some

parts broken by the chimneys falling through it, has allowed the rain to have free access to the upper rooms, and driven away the very reptiles which might have found a fit home in so deserted and wretched a building. No attempt has apparently been made to remove the worm-eaten timber or rusty iron-work that lies about. It appears to have remained where it has fallen, as if the spot was marked by some fearful curse, and man was unwilling to invade its dreary solitude.

Perhaps for this reason it was the better chosen as the hiding-place of the reckless characters who, for a time, made this their haunt at the period of our story. In one of the upper rooms at the back of the house, which looked over an expanse of low, swampy ground, on the extreme boundaries of which a few lamps might be seen struggling to glimmer through the marshy vapour, two persons were crouching in front of a small square iron stove, on a dark, boisterous evening at the beginning of March. The elements were at work without, as the fall of some decayed spout or loose tile, blown from its fastening, and clattering down upon the ground, occasionally bore witness; and the effect of the wind and rain was not altogether unfelt by the inmates of the apartment, in spite of the pains which had evidently been taken to render it less comfortless, by adapting pieces of tarpaulin and sacking to the apertures, as well as whatever fragments of wood were applicable to such miserable improvements. One of the occupants was a young man, and the other a girl of some eighteen or twenty years of age, in a tawdry, half-theatrical dress, over which a cloak of common serge was thrown, for the double purpose of protecting her attire and keeping out the cold. It will be needless to describe them further, as the reader has already been made acquainted with them, in the persons of Edward Morris and the female whose injured ankle Johnson had attended to when he went with Ledbury to the wax-work exhibition.

The course of evil adopted by Johnson's hapless cousin had not been abandoned; on the contrary, unable to extricate himself, he had plunged deeper into crime, as his present occupation fully testified. In the centre of the stove, the reflection of whose glow was studiously screened from being observed without in every direction, there was placed a small crucible, full of bubbling metal, that sparkled and scintillated with heat as the dross was occasionally removed from the surface. Pieces of white and glittering money lay in an old basket on the floor, and two moulds of plaster were placed by the side of the stove, but recently made, for the warmth of the fire was still driving away the steamy moisture from their substance.

"They are late to-night," observed the girl, in an undertone, as she cast an anxious glance at a handsome watch that hung upon a nail projecting from the brickwork of the chimney. "It is already past eleven."

"I shall not go until one of them returns," replied Morris: "at all events, I shall not give them up until midnight."

"I often think they deceive you," continued his companion. "Do you think that Harvey is to be trusted?"

"I have faith in him, as far as it can be given to one from another in such fellowship," returned Morris. "I care not if he betrays me. Life or death is now alike indifferent to me. I often wish that all was over."

"Do not think thus," returned the girl, as she turned her full dark eyes upon his wasted features, and earnestly watched his short and fevered respiration. "What would then become of me? I dare not return home again—there would be no hope. The cold, heartless streets——"

And, covering her face with her hands, she shuddered at the prospect she had conjured up.

Morris gazed at her for a few moments in silence. Branded—deserted as he was, there was still one being who cared for him. In the utter dreariness of his existence, he felt, for the instant, happy in possessing the disinterested love of this poor, fallen girl; for disinterested her affection must certainly have been, although otherwise lost and degraded.

"I did not mean to hurt you, Letty," he said, in a kinder tone than he generally used towards her. "I know you have given up all for me, and without any hope of return. I ought not to have said what I did; but I am weary of this hide-and-seek life."

"I forgive you, Morris," replied the girl, taking his attenuated hand. "I wish that all the world would offer you the same pardon, and as readily as I do."

"The moulds are now quite dry," observed Morris, suddenly turning the conversation, and taking up one of the matrices from the stove. "They are warm enough, too, to hold the metal without flying."

"Hist!" exclaimed the girl suddenly, in a half-whisper; "is there not some noise below? They are returned."

There was a temporary lull in the wind at this instant, and a low, subdued whistle was plainly audible.

"It is all right," said Morris; "let down the ladder. I cannot leave the casting."

The girl approached the square opening, which had once formed the summit of the staircase, and, with some exertion, dropped a roughly-contrived ladder to the floor beneath. It was received, and made steady, by some one below, and then a rakish-looking young man, in mustachios, with a flaunting red scarf round his neck, an eccentric wrapper about his body, and a cheap glossy hat on his head, worn considerably on one side—in fact, whose appearance altogether partook of that style which the "gents" denominate *flash*—climbed up the ladder and entered the room.

"Well, my p-pigeons," observed the new-comer, separating the initial letter from the rest of the word, with the same action of the lips used in repelling tobacco smoke from the mouth, only more forcibly expressed, "here I am at last. My service to you, Letty."

And he accompanied his salute with a bow in the extreme school of politeness, which was received on the part of Morris's companion with only a scornful curl of the upper lip.

"We began to think something had occurred," answered Morris, "you are so very late. You would not have found us here in another half-hour."

"Something *has* occurred," returned the stranger. "Cooper is caught, and spending the evening in the Bow Street station-house."

"The devil!" cried Morris at the intelligence, letting fall the mould from his hand. "How was it? Is he safe not to blab? How did it happen?"

"From his usual awkwardness," was the reply. "He expected to get change for a five-shilling piece at the toll-house of Waterloo Bridge."

"And they detected the bad money?" asked Morris.

"Rather," replied the other; "and about a dozen other pieces in his coat pocket. They are not the thing yet," he continued, stooping to take one from the basket on the floor. "The finger and thumb slide over them as if they were greased."

"Do you think he will let out anything?" asked Morris.

"No, no," was the answer. "It will do him no good, and would ruin his character amongst all well-minded people."

Those who had seen Mr. Roderick Doo, as he there called himself, amongst the audience at Grimley's play, would scarcely have recognised him in the last speaker, except by the mustachios which peeped out from the mass of shawls, handkerchiefs, and overalls in which he was enshrouded: yet so it was. He had met young De Robinson by chance in some of his aquatic parties; and having, in common with most accomplished swindlers, a plausible address, no small degree of tact to supply what he did not know, and a varnished off-hand style of conversation, never allowing his hearers time to think upon what he had said, and find out its inanity, he was just the person to suit the party he had gained an introduction to; although some of their other friends occasionally eyed him with a suspicious look, which seemed to intimate that they had a great desire to kick him into the horse-pond, as plainly as a glance could express so uncourteous a proceeding. He had various names, adapted to different circumstances; but as his present companions knew him equally well by all of them, we shall preserve the cognomination under which we first became acquainted with them.

The intelligence just conveyed to Morris, that one of their party had been taken—a worthless fellow from the purlieus of St. Giles's, who had a commission for putting the bad coin into circulation—was apparently anything but gratifying. He muttered a few sounds expressive of great annoyance, and remained for several minutes gazing on the fire, absorbed in thought; whilst the girl collected the pieces of money that had been already cast from the basket, and proceeded to fold each in paper separately.

"We shall not want these for some time, Letty," said Morris, at length speaking. "This game has been played long enough. I wonder what will be the next?"

"Something must be done, and that immediately," rejoined Roderick. "What money have you at present—real honest coin?"

"Not three days' expenditure," replied the other; "and I believe our credit is not sufficiently established for us to be trusted."

And a faint smile passed over his wan countenance as he spoke these words; but it was the ghastly and vacant simper of a galvanized corpse.

"I shall have my salary from the concert-room on Saturday," observed the girl, cheerfully, gratified at being able to contribute something to the general treasury. "The fifteen shillings will last some little time."

"Billiards are open," said Mr. Roderick Doo, who appeared to be absently passing every description of social larceny in review before his mind, "and I think something may be done by them. In six weeks the races will come on; and then we shall be sure of employment."

"You forget that I dare not show my face to the world," observed Morris; "I should be immediately apprehended."

"You have changed enough the last two months, Morris," remarked the girl, sadly. "I scarcely knew you when we met again."

"It is the cold I have suffered from so long," he rejoined: "but let that go, and you would see I should soon recover my usual looks. No, no—I will not run the risk. I would rather reclaim the money I deposited with my cousin."

"What is that?" asked Roderick eagerly. "I never heard you speak of it."

"There is upwards of a hundred pounds in bright sterling gold," answered Morris. "He promised to keep it untouched, and return it to me when it was wanted."

"He possesses more forbearance than I should have under similar circumstances," said the other, "if he keeps his word."

"Could you go to him respecting it?" asked Morris.

"No, that would never do. You forget the very different circumstances under which he has already met me—the idle, lounging man about town." And Mr. Doo spoke the few last words in the affected drawl which he was accustomed to adopt in society. "By the way," he continued, "his friend, young Ledbury, is coming to my lodgings. They say the old man is well off; and if I could persuade the son to play, we might make something of him."

"Is he to be drawn into it?"

"I think so. I could get a little from him by ingenuity, and more by frightening him. He appears simple enough for anything; and I know a few very clever tricks with cards which——"

"Now look here," interrupted Morris: "I will write to Johnson first, and request him to send or bring the money."

"Here! Is he to be trusted?" asked Mr. Doo, with a face of great alarm.

"You need have no fear upon that score. If he should hesitate to return the money, which, from some foolish notions of honesty, he may persist in doing, we will try some other scheme; and, in the meantime, you can pigeon young Ledbury to your heart's content, provided you get the chance."

The girl, who had been raking together the declining fuel in the

stove during the preceding conversation, now intimated to them that in a few more minutes they would be in darkness, as the room received its light from the fire alone. Morris, whose share in this dialogue had apparently exhausted him, remained perfectly silent for some minutes, except when a short hollow cough broke in upon his rapid but laboured breathing. At last he arose, and collecting a few of the most portable effects into the basket, which his female companion took charge of, they descended from the room, concealing the ladder, after they had reached the ground, beneath some of the loose planks of the floor. The high road was immediately in front of the building; but avoiding its publicity, they struck out across the open pastures behind the dwelling in the direction of Copenhagen House, taking one of the distant lights for their guide. Few people were abroad, from the lateness of the hour and the tempestuous state of the weather. Had there been any passengers on the road, the night was too dark for them to be observed; and, although they could see a dull red light in the upper window from the dying embers of the fire, yet being in the rear of the tenement, it was not likely to be discovered. Indeed, had the police been in search of the delinquents, the old house, from its apparently exposed position, would have been the last place investigated. When the party had crossed the fields, and once more approached the houses, they separated, Mr. Roderick partly retracing his steps by a more populous route, having first made an appointment for another evening.

“So,” thought that single-hearted gentleman, as he turned towards the direction of his lodgings, “Morris has a hundred pounds yet! It will not do to give him up until it is gone.”

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CHAPTER XXVII.

MR. LEDBURY VISITS A CUNNING MAN, WHO CASTS HIS NATIVITY.

FOR a week after the interview between Jack Johnson and old Mr. Ledbury, little occurred to vary the accustomed tranquillity of the family at Islington. Everybody was more or less out of sorts. Emma was as quietly angry as her sweet nature allowed her to be from circumstances not very difficult to be explained; Mrs. Ledbury thought Mr. Johnson had been treated very rudely and unceremoniously; Titus was equally indignant; and the old gentleman, from feeling that he was the primary cause of all the family discontent, grew equally uncomfortable; and finally, Master Walter Ledbury, not finding that attention paid him in the parlour which he was accustomed to expect, but everybody looking rather gloomy, in consequence of the absence of the individual whom Foster was accustomed to speak of in the

kitchen as "the young man Miss Emma kept company with," took it into his head to turn indignant with the rest of them. And so his character of a nursery chartist broke out more violently than ever. There was a general turn-out of all hands from the doll's house by his sole influence; he stopped a mill that turned round when it was drawn along the ground by sitting upon the machinery, and totally disjoining it; he harangued the nurse in various inflammatory speeches: had a collision with the troops, whom he perfectly routed, and drove into the fire; imprisoned the kitten in the rough-dried box; and finally resolved upon striking, not himself, but his little sister, which put the climax to the domestic revolution.

But during this period Titus had seen his friend several times, as well to sympathise with him, and form plans for future welfare, as to consult him concerning his own affairs; for we have seen that in all things he had a great notion of Jack's opinion and counsel. And ever since his meeting with the pretty *contadina* at the Antediluvians, he had lost himself in speculations as to the probability of her having sent him the valentine, which he looked at every day, to see if he could discover any fresh clue to the writer, hitherto unobserved. But all his minute inspection of the *t*'s, and *j*'s, and other letters, was in vain, and he was giving it up as a hopeless case, when a new chance appeared open to him. This arose from the conversation of the workwoman before alluded to, who, being engaged by Mrs Ledbury to construct some chair-covers, and being also admitted into the parlour during the perfection of a critical point in their manufacture, was accustomed to edify that lady with many interesting relations concerning her neighbours, and the economy of their household arrangements. A recent wedding had somewhat engrossed the attention of the Islingtonians—pronounced by the majority a strange and rather disreputable affair, from the good sense of the young couple in arranging everything with so much quiet and privacy that even Mrs. Huddle had been unable to gain any particulars to retail to her morning callers, who visited her for that express purpose. But the workwoman appeared to know something about it; and, moreover, affirmed that she had received information of the match a long time back from a fortune-teller, who was a connection of her own; and she mentioned this with an air of great importance, to impress her auditors with the idea that they were in the presence of a person who had relations of no ordinary kind. Titus listened to this narrative with great interest; and before the woman left, had not only obtained his name and address, but had also determined upon paying him a visit.

Accordingly, without mentioning his intention to anyone, not even to Jack Johnson, he set off the next evening, and at length arrived at the abode of the magician; which, being in an obscure neighbourhood, was not discovered until he had taken the advice of four bakers, two publicans, a policeman, and a charity-boy, respecting its position. He felt rather nervous, in spite of all he tried to make himself believe to the contrary; and when, according to directions, he rang the middle bell, on the left door-post, with the name of Brown, it was with a

subdued and humble action, that the wizard might be conciliated, and not send an army of imps after him, nor any other uncomfortable sprites, such as he had seen surrounding wizards on the frontispieces of prophetic almanacks. After a while an ancient woman opened the door, and having ascertained his business, ushered him upstairs to the second-floor front, which Mr. Ledbury supposed to be the waiting-room of the necromancer, who, although a magician by profession, was a watchmaker by trade. And here she left him in extreme trepidation, whilst she went to inform the great man of his arrival, whose study was apparently the two-*gair* back, separated from the other room by a thin partition. Anon Mr. Ledbury heard the crackling of wood, as if a fire had been lighted for the approaching incantation; then there was much whispering—spells, no doubt—between the wizard and the old woman, whom Titus would have not been at all surprised to see sailing into the room upon a broomstick; and lastly, he heard the wizard washing his hands, which terminated the unholy ceremonies he had been engaged in.

Upon being summoned into the mystic chamber, Mr. Ledbury half repented of his daring mission, and would have given a great deal to be in the street again, feeling a nervous trepidation which he had never experienced since his progress from the *corps du garde* to the Prefect of Police, on the second morning of his arrival in Paris. In fact, he half shut his eyes at entering, but was perfectly reassured—we might almost have said disappointed—when he opened them again. The room was only a common apartment! There was nobody dressed like Doctor Faustus, wearing a real boa-constrictor instead of a scarf, and all sorts of tinsel ornaments embroidered on his robe, as if they had been transferred from chemist's show-bottles. Neither were there crocodiles, bottle-imps, nor owls dispersed about the room, nor globes and huge telescopes, nor a circle of skulls upon the floor—not even the ring of under-done half-quarten loaves, which supply their place in "Der Freyschatz." And there was no vast brazier of green foil filling the room with incense, through the fumes of which could be seen visions of royal funerals, horrible shipwrecks, and attacks upon China. All was as commonplace as well could be. The room was simply whitewashed and uncarpeted; the magic tripod was a three-legged table; and the necromancer was an ordinary man of some forty years old, in a duffel dressing-gown and slippers!

However, Mr. Ledbury thought for the minute that this might be the effect of *glamour*, which, as it made cobwebs look like tapestry, according to "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," could possibly reverse the deception with equal ease. So he continued very respectful; and making his obeisance, said he had come to have his fortune told.

"I am not a fortune-teller, sir," replied the magician, rather grandly.

Mr. Ledbury, thinking he had made a mistake, begged his pardon, and was about to retire, when the other continued—

"I am an astrologer, sir: there is a great difference between the two. What is your wish? to have your nativity cast.

"It is, sir," answered Ledbury, presuming such to be the process which the common world called fortune-telling. "What is your charge?"

"For a slight investigation, half-a-crown," returned the man, as Ledbury acquiesced by taking his seat. "When were you born, sir?—the exact day and hour."

"About ten minutes after one in the morning, on the 16th of April, 18—," replied Ledbury, who had gained this minute information, having been told that it would be required.

The magician wrote down the date upon a piece of slate, and then referred to various almanacks and dog's-eared books of calculations, like ready-reckoners prolonged to immense sums. When his mind appeared perfectly easy on this point, he drew a scheme—one of those figures we see in Moore, which nobody ever understands, covered with hooks and eyes, and parallel lines with the cramp, and other diverting hieroglyphics. After he had made this out, he regarded it very attentively for some time, and then said—

"When you were about ten years and a quarter old you had the measles?"

Mr. Ledbury was afraid to contradict the astrologer, so simply bowed his head, although he had no recollection of the fact.

"And when you were fifteen and three-quarters, your life was despaired of from small-pox."

This, however, was a very bad shot, and compelled Mr. Ledbury to hint—very mildly indeed—that he had never taken the malady in question.

"Then you must have caught a violent cold in your head," continued the astrologer, mysteriously. "Did you not suffer from a violent cold in your head about that time?"

"I cannot say that I did," returned Mr. Ledbury; "but I had very bad chilblains."

"That is it, then," replied the other. "I think you must have made a slight mistake in the exact time of your birth. If you were born at nine minutes and thirty-five seconds after one, you had chilblains; but if it was ten minutes, then you must have had a violent cold. Are you quite certain that it was not the first-named moment?"

"Very possibly it might have been," answered Ledbury. Indeed, had the astrologer insisted that he was born the week before, he would have believed it.

"You are in the sixth house," observed the seer, looking at the horoscope with deep attention.

"No—number fifteen," said Mr. Ledbury, taking the allusion to be meant for his own abode.

The man, who was apparently immersed in deep speculations, took no notice of this error, but continued—

"You have come here to obtain knowledge concerning something which you are curious to discover—so say the stars. Am I not right?"

"You are perfectly correct, sir," replied Ledbury, amazed at the power of the astrologer. "I had a valentine, and——"

“And you wish to know the writer,” rapidly interrupted the astrologer. “You need not tell me, for I see it in your nativity. It came from a lady whom you once met in company with a dark man, a present, and a journey about to be taken under adverse circumstances.”

“It was Miss Seymour, then!” said Ledbury to himself. “The dark man was her brother, the present was the ticket, and the adverse journey—ah! what was that?” And for a minute or two this question somewhat posed him, until he made up his mind that it was going home to Islington, through Park Village, with Mr. Doo, and having to pay all the fare himself.

“One piece of information more,” continued the man. “You have enemies who speak ill of you behind your back, but you will ultimately triumph over them.”

“The Grimleys,” thought Ledbury.

“And you will finally marry the lady of your choice; but you must avoid getting your feet wet for the next year and a half. The horoscope predicts no more for half-a-crown. Will you search deeper into futurity?”

“I think not, sir,” answered Titus, who had heard quite enough. “You have satisfied me on the most important point, and I am much obliged to you. Good evening.”

And, without waiting to see if the astrologer would order a car, drawn by two grillins, to bear him away, Mr. Ledbury laid the fee upon the table, and then left the house, feeling a great deal more courageous in the fresh air of the streets than he had done in the chamber of fate; and firmly determined to buy a pair of cork-soled boots on the morrow, for wet days, that his afflictions might not be blighted.

It was still early in the evening, and he therefore thought he would call upon Jack Johnson, before he went home, and have some conversation with him. Besides, he knew Jack would be delighted to see him, if it was only to receive tidings of Emra; and he therefore took his way towards his friend's house in North Street, and fortunately found him at home.

“Well, Leddy,” said Jack, after they had chatted some little time about their own immediate love affairs on either side, which conversation was more interesting to themselves than to the reader,—“Well, Leddy, I have made up my mind. This is the last evening you will see me here.”

“Nonsense, Jack! what do you mean?” asked Ledbury, half alarmed. “You are not going to do anything foolish?”

“Well, that remains to be proved,” returned Jack. “I am going apprentice to a medical man. You know I commenced the study two or three years ago, and ought not to have abandoned it; but I had no motive then for going on with it.” And he spoke the last words with a significant smile, which was immediately followed up by a very forlorn sigh.

“And whom are you going to be with?” asked Ledbury.

“Oh! nobody very particular,” replied Johnson. “But there

will not be much premium asked, and I shall see some practice—both which things are advantageous. He lives near St. John Street, and his name is Rawkins."

"Oh! I think I know the place," observed Ledbury. "It is a retail—is it not?"

"Precisely: a blue-bottle shop, as we used to call them, with penny pitch-plasters in the window. Yet it suits my purpose, and—what is of more consequence—my purse."

"I suppose I can come and see you there, Jack?" said Titus.

"You shall go with me to-night, if you like. All my traps have been taken there this morning, and I leave the old rooms in about an hour. It is all for the best, I know; but I cannot bear going away."

"You will be nearer to us than ever," observed Ledbury, wishing to comfort his friend, who appeared in very low spirits, but evidently trying to fight up against them.

"And what good will that be to me—now?" replied Johnson. "I should have looked forward to it once."

"But you have such capital spirits, Jack," said his friend, "I can scarcely imagine you could ever be dull."

"Oh! my spirits are good enough when I am excited or amused," replied Johnson; "but they are very different when I am alone, with nothing but gloomy things to think about. I wish I had your equal temper—then I should not care so much about leaving these shabby old rooms; but I have been here so long!"

Ledbury might have replied that, let our disposition be what it may, there is a sad desolate feeling, inseparable from leaving the abode in which we have dwelt for any length of time. The common inanimate household things about the room—hircings though they be to every new tenant—have become a part and parcel of our being; there is a familiarity in the very sprigs and flowers on the walls—almost a sympathy, which only a long residence can induce; and, like the poor captive, who, when released from his long imprisonment, crept back, blinded by the sun's glare, to the noisome dungeon which time and misery had taught him to look upon as his house, and turn even its spiders and reptiles into household gods—we still cling to any old residence with regard, although our sojourn therein might have been chequered with sorrow and annoyances. But those very shadows have hallowed it in our remembrance.

As there was still some little time to spare before the period appointed for Jack's arrival at his new place, as he termed it, he appropriated the last hour to the luxury of enjoying a pipe, in company with Mr. Ledbury; and when they had puffed themselves into a becoming placidity of spirits, and puffed one another into the idea that they were both extraordinary fine fellows, as well as discussed a farewell measure of the peculiar commingled fluid that came from "round the corner," Jack gave a final glance at the drawers and closets, to see that nothing was left behind, paid his bill, restored the keys to the landlady, and then set off, accompanied by Ledbury, to enter upon the duties of his new office.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OF MR. RAWKINS; HIS DOMESTIC ECONOMY; AND JACK JOHNSON'S FRESH START IN LIFE.

THE medical establishment conducted by Mr. Rawkins was situated in one of the streets which would be intersected by a line drawn from the New River Head to Clerkenwell Green; and the red bull's-eye lamp over the door formed a principal object in the thoroughfare, in the absence of any more remarkable features. It was essentially a doctor's shop, and might have been mistaken by thoughtless pedestrians for a mere chemist and druggist's, had not the framed diploma of the Apothecaries' Company, ostentatiously displayed in the window, borne testimony to the proper graduation of the owner—being, in fact, a licence to kill human game by powder and ball, in the shape of calomel and bolus, which every person regularly qualified for that art must possess. In the same manner, the apprentice's indenture is merely a certificate to carry a gun, or, more properly, a mortar—the missiles from which are frequently as destructive as those sent from its namesake, *monstre*, used whilom at Antwerp.

The window of Mr. Rawkins' surgery was set out with much elaborate care, and a great eye to display. Besides the legitimate drugs, usually seen, there were elegant arabesques of teeth upon black velvet tablets, as well as mysterious instruments and chemical apparatus, of curiously incomprehensible shapes. These were diversified with packets of soda-powders, whose blue and white envelopes gave an animated appearance to the window, heightened by the dusky red of the ready-made pitch-plasters, and the doubtful white of the plaster-of-paris horse, which occupied the centre pane. There were, also, announcements in gold letters upon glass slips, similar to those we see at pastrycooks, except that they notified "BLEEDING," and "PATENT MEDICINES," instead of ices and ginger-beer. Mr. Kooops, the practitioner in the next street, who merely lived in a private house with a brass-plate on the door, had circulated reports prejudicial to the respectability and high-standing of Mr. Rawkins as a medical man—affirming that he also sold lucifers, Windsor-soap, jujubes, and tooth-brushes; but this is supposed to have been an idle rumour, not propagated until the practitioner in the next street just mentioned had lost the appointment of surgeon to the police-force, to which his more fortunate opponent had lately been elected.

Mr. Rawkins was so extraordinary a person for a medical practitioner, that, had we only read of him, instead of having known him, we should at once have put him down as the far-fetched creation of an author's brain. He was about eight-and-thirty years old, and of herculean form, except his legs, which were small by comparison with the rest of his body. But he thought that he was modelled after the statues of antiquity; and, indeed, as respected his nose, which was broken, he was not far wrong in this idea—that feature having been

rather damaged in some hospital skirmish when he was a student. His face was adorned with a luxuriant fringe of black whiskers, meeting under his chin, whilst his hair, of the same hue, was cut rather short about his head, and worn without the least regard to any particular style or direction; indeed, when, in any fit of abstraction, he rubbed his fingers through it all round, his head somewhat resembled the light feather brooms used for dusting drawing-room curiosities.

But it was his class of pursuits which made him so singular a character. Every available apartment in his house, not actually occupied by human beings, was appropriated to the conserving of innumerable rabbits, guinea-pigs, and ferrets. His areas were filled with poultry; bird-cages hung at every window; and the whole of the roof had been converted into one enormous pigeon-trap, in which it was his most favourite occupation to sit on fine afternoons, with a pipe and brandy-and-water, and catch his neighbours' birds. As may be presumed, he was not married—no wife would have allowed such a zoological legion to overrun the house—and so he kept precisely what dinner company he chose; his usual and most welcome associates being the bird-fanciers of Cow Cross and Saffron Hill, one of whom, never known by any other name than "Hoppy," was his inseparable companion.

He had very little private practice: the butcher, baker, and tobacconist were his chief patients, who employed him more especially with the intention of working out their accounts. He derived his principal income from the retail of his shop, which an apprentice attended to, his appointments of medical man to the police-force and parish poor, and breeding fancy-rabbits; and these various avocations pretty well filled up his time, the remainder of which was dedicated to paying his addresses to the widow Ludlady of the large public-house at the end of the street. When he was not at home, or visiting his patients, he was always to be found sitting inside the bar: and through associating freely with every chance customer who came in, he really picked up a small share of his practice. When at home, he passed his spare minutes in practising gymnastics—balancing himself upon one hand, laying hold of staples, and keeping himself out at right angles to the wall, with other feats of strength; the acquisition of which he deemed necessary in enabling him to support the character of Hercules—his most favourite personation—with due effect.

The remaining members of his establishment besides himself, his apprentice Mr. Prodgers, who was just beginning to attend his lectures at the London University, and Hoppy, who may be considered as one of the household, inasmuch as he dined with Mr. Rawkins nearly every day—were comprised in a servant-of-all-work and a fag-boy, whose face had never been washed in the memory of the oldest inhabitant of the street. This possibly was not to be wondered at when his multifarious occupations were taken into consideration; no more than the assertion that he was never known to sit down but once, upon the occasion of Mr. Prodgers insisting upon drawing one of his teeth, which had grown hind-side before, or topsy-turvy, or in some other irregular manner. He took down the shutters, washed the bottles, tended the

animals, fed the birds, cleaned all the boots, shoes, knives, and culinary utensils, carried out the medicines, fetched the beer, went upon all errands, and sifted the cinders. He had not quite passed from the chrysalis or grub state of the charity-boy into the butterfly *imago* of the page, but appeared to have been prematurely transformed, thus preserving an equal share of the attribute of either stage of existence. His chief duty, after all, was to be cuffed and kicked about by everybody for eighteenpence a week and his nutriment; and he went by the name of Bob.

It was past nine in the evening when Jack Johnson and Ledbury arrived at Mr. Rawkins' abode, and the shutters had been put up nearly an hour; but there was a light over the fan of the door, and upon ringing the bell they were admitted by the boy, who never went home until eleven—which was a very fair hour, considering he never had to be back again before six in the morning.

"Is Mr. Rawkins at home?" asked Jack.

"No, he isn't, sir," replied the boy. "He's got a bad case, and I don't know when he'll be back."

"Never mind," continued Jack, as the boy appeared anxious to close the door upon them. "We'll come in at all events."

And, evidently to Bob's extreme terror and discomfort, they entered the shop, and proceeded into the back room, when the cause of his denying his master was instantly apparent. It was a small, dirty, apartment, separated from the surgery by a glass-door and screened from the vulgar gaze by a rusty piece of red serge. On two rabbit-hutches against the wall, whose inmates appeared particularly scared by an unwonted and untimely clatter, stood Mr. Rawkins, in the character of Hercules, apparently attired for a masquerade, and now endeavouring to throw himself into various attitudes, expressive of antique statues, his *pose* at the moment of their entrance being that of the brawny god when slaying the "learned Hygeist," as the doctor, in his ignorance of the classics and character of a regular medical man, denominated the many-headed reptile. Hoppy, who had been assisting him to pad his legs with an indefinite number of stockings, aided by numerous pieces of tow and lint, was calmly seated on a large inverted bell-metal mortar, at the fireside, contemplating his friend's performance, in the full enjoyment of a short pipe; and the boy, Bob, had put down some sandals, that he was cleaning with pipe-clay, to answer the bell; but he now resumed his task immediately.

"Ha! Mr. Johnson, how d'ye do?" exclaimed Mr. Rawkins, upon recognising Jack as he entered. "Here we are, as the clown says, all right. Mr. Johnson—Hoppy; Hoppy—Mr. Johnson; not such a fool as he looks. Happy to know your friend, sir."

Jack immediately introduced Ledbury, who thought he had got into a small private lunatic asylum, to the medical practitioner.

"Bob didn't know you," continued Mr. Rawkins. "I told him to say I was out. 'Won't do, you know, for patients to see me like this! Those sandals will do, Bob. Now run about after a cab.'"

"I am afraid I have come too early," observed Jack.

"Not at all! don't mention it! happy to see you! What do you

think of this? Dying gladiator, three positions. One—two—three, and last. Slave grinding the knife. Thingamyjig defying the lightning. That's the ticket, I think—isn't it?"

And as he spoke he stamped about the hutches, and rapidly threw himself into the positions of the statues named, which considerably increased Mr. Ledbury's amazement.

"You see," continued Mr. Rawkins, "you want the music to give the effect. Look here, now. Cinnamon—what's his name?—fastening on his sandal."

And he began to sing. "Tum—tum—ti rum tum tum: tum tummy rummy tummy—rum—tum—tum!" and at the last note of the symphony he fell into the desired attitude.

"That's capital good!" remarked Hoppy, knocking the ashes from his pipe upon the hob.

"Yes; I rather think that will do," replied the master of the house. "You see, Mr. Johnson, I'm going to a fancy ball for the benefit of one of my patients. Do you not think this a good style of dress?"

"Excellent! very capital!" said Jack.

"And your friend, Mr. Tilbury, what does he think of it?"

"It is a most imposing and classical costume," replied Titus, who presumed the remark was meant for him.

At this moment Bob rang the bell, and then informed his master that the cab was at the door.

"I am sorry I cannot stay longer with you," observed Mr. Rawkins. "And Hoppy, too, is obliged to leave. Mr. Prodgers also is gone to—where is Mr. Prodgers gone to, Bob?"

"Surgical lecture, sir, at the University."

"Ah! yes," continued his master. "They give very long lectures there. Mr. Prodgers don't get back again sometimes until four in the morning. However, Mr. Johnson, you will, perhaps, be good enough to let him in when he comes. The night-bell hangs at your bed's head."

"I will take care to do so," replied Jack.

"And, pray, you and your friend have what you like. The servant will bring you up some supper. If anybody comes you must say I am at a bad case: if they want medicine, give them some of these." And he took down a white jar, labelled "PIL: HUM:" "They can't do any harm, *Pilula Humburgensis*; made for the policemen and the poor people—yellow soap and liquorice powder."

The ancient statue flourished a little more about the room, and then getting Hoppy to open the door all ready, bolted into the cab. Jack and Ledbury then sat down by themselves, and ordered up the supper, which, to do Rawkins justice, was a very excellent one; for, with all his eccentric habits, he kept a famous table. As soon as Bob had fetched the beer, which was pronounced exceedingly pretty half-and-half, he got his dismissal, and, the servant having gone to bed, Titus remained with his friend another hour. At last, not having the key, and not wishing to spend another evening in the slipper-bath, Mr. Ledbury wished Jack good-night, promising to call upon him the next morning to see how he was going on, and give him tidings of everybody at home, and one in particular.

CHAPTER XXIX.

JOHNSON'S FIRST NIGHT IN HIS NEW ABODE.

As soon as Ledbury had departed, Jack turned his thoughts towards going to bed, there being no particular inducement to stay up by himself. The apartment was a two-bedded room at the top of the house, having a couple of doors, one for entrance and the other for exit ; the last being situated at the top of the ladder, and leading into the pigeon-trap. The room was to be shared by Mr. Prodgers and himself, as Mr. Rawkins had informed him ; but he had not the least idea of the former gentleman's disposition or pursuits beyond finding that there was a very strong smell of stale tobacco pervading the interior, as well as a thick stick, and a cabman's oilskin hat lying upon the drawers. He evidently was in the habit of combining instruction with amusement, as appeared from a heterogeneous mass of bones, song-books, chemical tests, pipes, and packs of cards, which covered the tables. There was also a phrenological head upon one of the shelves, upon which had been tied a false pasteboard nose, with mustachios ; probably the *souvenir* of some *soirée dansante* in the Crown and Anchor booth.

Johnson's boxes had been forwarded in the morning ; and, having arranged his wardrobe in the best manner, wherever he found an available opportunity for so doing, he jumped into bed, finding the one allotted to him, by the side of which hung an enormous bell communicating with the street-door post. He was soon lost in reflection upon this new phase of his life, undisturbed even by the scratching of the rabbits in the adjoining room, who were peculiarly restless, from the circumstance of Bob having forgotten to feed them, in the excitement of preparing Mr. Rawkins in his antique impersonations. And having meditated for some time ; at one time thinking everything around him gloomy and desponding, and immediately afterwards cheered by some bright anticipation ; now regretting that he had quitted his old apartments and usual manner of living for what, from its very strangeness, appeared wretched and unpromising ; and now feeling certain that all would turn out well, and that he was submitting to it as much for Emma's sake as for his own—possibly a great deal more so—his ideas became gradually confused, and he fell asleep.

He had slumbered about a couple of hours, when he was roused, somewhat unceremoniously, by a violent peal of the large bell over his head, which had been set ringing with such a force that it kept vibrating several seconds after he had started up ; and, before he had perfectly collected himself, he was furthermore serenaded by two or three voices in the street shouting a chorus, which appeared to be a declaration on the part of each vocalist that he was a gipsy king, following the asseveration by a short double-knock laugh of exultation at the enviable circumstance, in which they all joined with singular and

simultaneous precision. Aware that patients were not in the habit of coming for medical men in so harmonious a manner, Jack was for a minute at a loss to imagine who the visitors could be, until another pull at the bell caused him to throw open the window, when his appearance was immediately greeted with three cheers from vocalists below.

"Who's there?" cried Jack, not having the least idea whether an insult or a compliment was intended by this reception.

"Lully—lully—lully—liety!" replied a voice, pertaining to a Taglioni that was looming about on the pavement, in the most approved style of *al fresco* Tyrolese harmony.

"What do you want, gentlemen?" inquired Jack, thinking it much the best plan to be polite.

"To come in, to be sure!" answered the Taglioni. And then the three visitors, without waiting for a reply, commenced a comic Chinese dance in the middle of the road, which was somewhat unceremoniously checked by a policeman.

"Who are you?" cried one of the party, in a supercilious tone.

"I'll pretty soon let you know who I am, if you go on making this noise," returned the policeman.

"Take us all up, then," added another.—"Who stole the lobster? Answer me that. I repeat the question, and will abide by the consequences. Who stole the lobster?"

We are not aware of the circumstances which gave birth to the above crustaceous insinuation; but it appeared to have the effect of making the policeman very angry, for he advanced at once towards the party, and seized one of them by the collar.

"Hallo, Frank!" cried the Taglioni, "what are you about? Don't you know me?"

"Mr. Prodgers!" exclaimed the policeman, as he recognised his prisoner, and immediately let go his hold. "I'm sure I did not, sir. I ask you a thousand pardons."

Mr. Rawkins, we have stated, was surgeon to the police-force; and as Mr. Prodgers filled this situation as his deputy, he was on excellent terms with all the division.

"Oh!" cried Jack Johnson, who had been watching the scene with much interest, and now caught the name, "I suppose you are my fellow-apprentice, then? Why didn't you say so before?"

And, immolating a lucifer in the production of a light, he went downstairs forthwith, and admitted the other pupil, in company with his friends, bolting the door after him.

"Mr. Johnson, I suppose?" observed Mr. Prodgers, as Jack closed the door. "Hope you are well, sir? Shake hands. Hope we shall be capital friends, sir? If you're a cholly jick, I'm sure we shall. My other friends, sir, are Mr. Simmons and Mr. Tweak."

"Well," thought Jack, as Mr. Prodgers followed him upstairs, accompanied by his companions, "he seems an odd bird, at all events. What does he mean by a cholly jick?"

The two friends appeared to be perfectly well acquainted with the minute anatomy of the house; for, upon entering the double-bedded

room, they opened various drawers and closets, until they produced some tobacco and black bottles, together with some bundles of sticks, which they thrust into the fireplace, and kindled with old books.

"Will you poke a smipe, Mr. Johnson?" asked Mr. Prodgers.

"Will I do what?" returned Jack. "Upon my honour, I do not quite comprehend you."

"Oh! I forgot," replied Mr. Prodgers. "Cart before the horse, you know; poke a smipe—smoke a pipe, and so on: nothing else. Medical Greek, Gower Street dialect. We think it rather a fine language."

Johnson had not the least objection to join them; in fact, he expressed himself quite delighted to do so; and, hurriedly pulling on a few of his things, he took his place at the table, from which everything had been unceremoniously thrust upon the floor with one effective sweep, to make room for the bottles. Mr. Prodgers then produced a cold ham from a hat-box, and some bread from his carpet-bag; after which, as the fire had not sufficiently burnt up, he proceeded to boil some water in a Florence flask over the candle. And, these preparations being completed, in a short time the party were very comfortable, and exceedingly lively, considering it was past three in the morning.

"You have seen the governor, I suppose, Johnson?—I must call you Johnson, you know—it saves time."

Johnson replied in the affirmative.

"He's a feer quish, isn't he?" continued Mr. Prodgers. "All you have got to attend to is, never to do anything he tells you. I never do; depend upon it, it is the best way."

"I have no doubt we shall get on remarkably well," answered Jack, laughing. "He certainly is very peculiar."

"You didn't expect to have company here to-night," resumed the apprentice. "Lord bless you! we have such set-outs in this room whenever the governor goes to a bancey fall. He never comes back until seven in the morning."

"Does he always go as Hercules?" asked Jack.

"Always," replied the other; "and drinks no end of nectar, to keep up the character. I wish he would push the resemblance a little further, and keep the rabbit-hutches in order himself, like his original did the stable. Bob could go on all our errands then. But he never gets up early enough."

In fact, Johnson had surmised as much when he first saw Mr. Rawkins, who always looked as if the strings of his genius had been relaxed by the constant damp of gin-and-water. But he could not expect many advantages for the small premium that had been required; and, with his usual power of entirely adapting himself to existing circumstances, determined upon making the best of it. Besides, his sojourn in that gentleman's house was not for any lengthened term of pupilage: he had served much of his time to a medical man before his father's death, and he now only wished to make up the remainder, that he might be enabled to present himself for examination. In spite of his reckless vivacity, he had natural talents of a high order, which

only wanted a little exertion on his part to bring them into play. His faults were more those of bringing up than disposition; and oftentimes he was thinking deepest when the world imagined he was all carelessness and jocosity.

Mr. Prodgers—resolved upon spending the night with his companions, free from any disturbance or interruption—as soon as they were all settled, proceeded to tie a leathern glove round the clapper of the night-bell; which he said was his general custom upon retiring to rest, because he did not like being called up during the hours appropriated to sleep.

“Policemen,” observed Mr. Prodgers, “are never ill in the night, they have so much to attend to; poor people never ought to be; and so I see no reason for being annoyed with this bell.”

“And do they never come, then?” asked Jack.

“Not to my knowledge,” replied the other. “If they do, finding it is of no use, they probably go to the doctor’s in the next street. He is a young man, trying to work his way into practice, and, like all the rest of them—a set of bleak, who will jump at anything. It does him good, and keeps his circulation active. I think it’s a charity.”

And having delivered himself of this opinion, Mr. Prodgers took several philosophical whiffs from his pipe, and winked separately at his companions, who had been so deeply wrapped up in their own enjoyments that they had said but very little since they came in; but they expressed their approbation of his sentiments by nodding their heads, and patting the table with their hands, after which, as if some spell had been broken by this ceremony, they entered into conversation. This was chiefly to the effect that they had been passing the evening at a private free-and-easy club of medical pupils, somewhere over an eating-house in Grafton Street, who called themselves “The Tourniquets,” and gave up a few hours from the harassing labours of their profession to the enjoyment of social harmony and diluted alcohol. Mr. Tweak, who was a fresh man, compared to the others, was in raptures at the very pleasant evening he had spent, and recollected every song and joke he had heard with wonderful accuracy.

“Ah! you have not been to the ‘Eagle’ yet, observed Mr. Simmons, with the patronising air of a senior pupil. “That’s the place, my boy! We will go one of these fine nights.”

“What is it like?” asked Mr. Tweak.

“Oh! a perfect Elysium!” said Prodgers; “you walk about and hear oratorios.”

“Oratorios,” quietly returned Mr. Tweak, “ah—um—they are not very lively things, I believe?”

“Pretty well,” replied Jack Johnson; “but they have other music besides that. Have you heard the Exeter Hall Quadrilles?”

“No. What are they?”

“Arranged by Jullien, for the opposition shop a little nearer Temple Bar. You will be delighted with hearing them—when you do.”

From this moment Mr. Prodgers received Jack Johnson into his warmest friendship. Mr. Simmons felt equally well inclined towards

him; and Mr. Tweak, highly gratified at the desire of imparting useful knowledge which his new acquaintance evidently possessed, said he should be very happy to see him at all times, and begged to give him his address, which, being at present rather short-sighted, he did in the shape of a surgical-instrument maker's card, that a little boy had been presenting, with a low bow, to all the pupils as they left the hospital, after demonstration in the morning.

The time went on, and the *quartette* still remained in their places, occasionally varying the night's enjoyment with a little harmony. At last they began to get more quiet; then their heads occasionally nodded towards the table; and, finally, Mr. Simmons threw himself upon one of the beds. From this position however, he was immediately driven by Mr. Prodggers, who objected altogether to the proceeding; stating, by way of palliating the apparent rudeness with which he turned his friend off, that it had frequently happened, when his visitors had laid down on the beds, after a time they began to feel cool, and then generally got under the clothes with their boots on, which made Rawkins very angry, and the servant exceedingly out of temper, especially when the above-named visitors had been previously running about the streets upon wet evenings. So Mr. Simmons gave up the point, and returned to his chair, whereon he fell asleep at one end of the table, and Mr. Tweak at the other, like the Count and his servant in "The Miller and his Men," Prodggers and Jack Johnson retiring to their own couches; and in another quarter of an hour all was silent.

The morn, which would doubtlessly have been very rosy-fingered had it not been for the rain, had illumined the fields of Coldbath and the turrets of the House of Correction, shedding her early light over the unknown limits of Gray's Inn Road, and the equally abrupt termination of Calthorpe Street, when our slumberers were aroused, almost at the same instant, by a violent and continued knocking at the door. It is no easy matter to shake off repose in an instant after late potations, and Johnson and Prodggers both waited for the others to see what it was before they exerted themselves; but finding the visitors still heavy with sleep, Jack went to the window and opened it, for the second time, to learn the cause of the disturbance, since, in addition to the knocking, there was a considerable noise in the street.

And well there might be. On the steps of the door, surrounded by a group of milk-women, cab-drivers, sweeps, little boys, and coffee-stall keepers, stood Mr. Rawkins, in all the majesty of his Heracles' dress, vainly endeavouring to obtain entrance into his own house, for, although he had the key, Johnson had bolted the door and put up the chain, after he had admitted Prodggers and his friends, not understanding the customary regulations of the house under such circumstances. Every time Mr. Rawkins thundered at the door—for he had pulled away the bell-handle long ago, in consequence of the clapper being muffled—the little boys set up such a cheer that it might have been heard at Sadler's Wells, or even at the Angel; and when he ran after one of them, and inflicted summary chastisement, in the *tableau* of "Heracles and Lichas," they literally choked with ecstasy.

Perceiving how things stood, Johnson rushed downstairs with all the speed he could command, and admitted his new master, braving his ire at all hazards. And, for a few minutes, very terrible to behold was the anger of Mr. Rawkins, until Jack contrived to explain the mistake, which somewhat appeased him; adding that, in the ignorance of his new locality, he had unconsciously pushed the head of his bed against the bell, which had prevented it from ringing. It appeared that an acquaintance who lived near him had brought Mr. Rawkins home in his cab, and putting him down at the door, had immediately driven off, by which means he had been exposed to the jeers of the crowd. However, he believed it was all a mistake; and having asked Mr. Prodgers, who now came down, "if any messages had been left, and anybody been"—after the manner of most gentlemen when they come home at all excited and very late—and received an answer in the negative, he walked off to bed, leaving orders for Bob not to fail in procuring some grains for the rabbits. The other two then returned, and dismissed their visitors as quietly as they could, after which they crept into bed again, Prodgers informing Jack that nobody was ever about very early in the house except Bob and the servant.

And so passed the first night that Jack Johnson spent beneath the zoological roof of Mr. Rawkins.



CHAPTER XXX.

IN WHICH MR. LEDBURY TAKES HIS SISTER INTO THE COUNTRY; THEIR PROGRESS AND ARRIVAL.

THERE are few families residing in the more private streets of the metropolis and its suburbs, where the tide of population is not very great, and commercial bustle is equally trifling, insensible to the social annoyance of having neighbours who, without any visible attraction in the street—in the perfect absence of Punch's shows, broken-down cabs, or ingenious demonstrators of every use to which a chair can be applied in supporting the human body, except as a seat—without one of those temporary spectacles, we repeat, are continually looking out of window. No sooner does any daring individual, of great moral courage, and more than ordinary nerve, disturb the wonted tranquillity of the neighbourhood by a double knock of unusual energy at one of the doors, than the adjacent windows, opposite and contiguous, become frames for a series of living portraits, whose eyes are all turned towards the intrepid stranger. The flapping of the beaver's tail does

not produce more restless vigilance amongst the other inhabitants of his colony than do the concussions of the lion's head in the economy of those who reside within earshot of its thunder.

Any person of moderate capabilities who had been in the habit of seeing the little ships blown up, or the visitors startled by placing their hands upon the galvanic columns at the Polytechnic Institution, might easily have been persuaded that there were secret wires running from the knocker of Mr. Ledbury's street-door to the different articles of furniture in the drawing-room pertaining to the Grimleys; for no sooner did the aforesaid knocker inflict rapid chastisement upon the metal nut placed there to bear its convulsive assaults, than the chairs and ottomans next door appeared to act on the theory of repulsion, and drove whoever chanced to have taken possession of them with great energy towards the windows; the panes of which attracted them for a short time, and then repelled them when the end was attained; in the same manner (to follow out the theory of domestic electricity in accordance with the scientific taste of the age) that the piece of glass, when excited, causes the bits of paper to jump from the table towards it, and after remaining for a period in close approximation to its surface, to return to the spot whence they came. But this phenomenon only took place in the drawing-room; in the parlour there was no necessity to go to the windows at all, for Mr. Horace Grimley had set up a piece of looking-glass outside in a crafty manner, only perfected after many trials; and then the Grimley family in general had never any occasion to move from where they were stationed, because, by a cunning optical illusion, upon looking at this mirror, all the Ledburys' visitors appeared to be walking through their own wire blinds, and into the window-shutters, where they were finally lost.

One fine morning, however, a few days after the events of the last chapter, the Grimleys were looking out at a comparatively early hour, and constantly peeping between the hyacinths that bloomed in the window towards next door; although their attention had not been summarily attracted by any knock of unwonted assurance, nor did the house of Ledbury present any unusual appearance of bustle. But still there was enough to put them upon the alert; for the night before, old Mrs. Hoddle's maid had been to the flyman to ask about the price of a conveyance to Hornsey on a particular evening in anticipation; and there she had learnt that a fly had been ordered to be at Mr. Ledbury's punctually at nine o'clock the next morning, to go to the South-Western Railway. Of course, Mrs. Hoddle's maid immediately conveyed this important piece of local intelligence to her mistress; and by that medium the Grimleys also became acquainted with it. For dear Miss Grimley had gone in on that very evening, so pleasant and kind as she always was, to take tea with Mrs. Hoddle, and learn how to make frizzled spills of coloured paper for the mantel-piece, which her brother, with his coarse ideas, always termed fancy pipe-lights, to her very great horror and disgust; and during this visit they had talked over everything they knew about everybody, and a great deal more that they did not, until their stock of subjects was

almost exhausted ; so that this new bit of information came in most opportunely, although they could not conceive what the fly could possibly have been ordered for. It was certainly very strange, and the mystery was not at all cleared up by a chance visit of the washer-woman, who stated that she had been obliged to take most of the things home on Thursday night instead of Saturday, because they were wanted particularly. Mrs. Hoddle and her visitor went over every probable solution of the enigma, with long comments upon each ; and at last came to the conclusion that Emma Ledbury was going to elope the next morning with Mr. Johnson, aided and abetted by her papa and mamma, to save expense, and avoid creating a sensation. And this idea was the more strengthened because they had not seen Mr. Johnson go there a great deal lately, which was meant, they were assured, as a blind, to deceive all those neighbours who took an interest in the proceedings ; which class may be reasonably assumed to comprise everybody who lived in the street, upon both sides of the way, including the family at the end, who called their house, $\frac{A}{B}$, from a belief that this thoroughfare was more respectable than the one which ran at right-angles to it : and implied by their address that they lived therein, although the street-door, from which the locality of a house is generally ascertained, was round the corner.

As Miss Grimley conveyed the news home with her that night, we can understand the cause of the vigilance in the family the next morning, and the active look-out that was kept as the time approached. At last, a few minutes after nine, the fly drew up to the door, and presently the new page appeared, with a square box sewed up in a canvas, which obstinately refused to go inside at either of the doors, or in any direction, but was finally placed upon the driving-seat, giving rise to a curious contemporary surmise in inquiring minds, as to where it was possible for the flyman to perch himself when it had been put there. Next Foster appeared with an umbrella, a parasol, and a Berlin-wool frame, taken to pieces, enveloped in a shawl, and tied round with string, which were collectively deposited within the carriage ; and directly afterwards Master Walter Ledbury, in a dirty pinafore and ancient buff slippers—the *débris* of a pair purchased last year in the Isle of Thanet—rushed from the house in a paroxysm of excitement ; and having executed a wild dance of triumph round the fly, concluded his performance by hugging the muddy hind-wheel, and trying to creep between its spokes, from which perilous situation he was forcibly snatched away by Foster, and carried back to the parlour in violent convulsions. Then came more parcels and band-boxes, containing, as the Grimleys supposed, the wedding-clothes ; and finally Titus and Emma entered the fly, waving their hands to the inmates of the parlour, and nodding to one or two little heads at the nursery window, until the glasses were drawn up and the vehicle moved off. The Grimleys immediately came to the conclusion that Emma was going to be married, that Titus was to give her away, and that Mr. Johnson was waiting for them at some unknown church, in a brown coat, dead gold buttons, and white gloves ; upon which point having set their minds perfectly at rest, Miss Grimley ran in with the

intelligence to Mrs. Huddle ; and the other branches of the family resumed their breakfast, to canvass over the strange manner in which the Ledburys did everything. And here we will leave them, and return to the occupants of the fly.

Emma was in anything but good spirits ; and so far the expression of her countenance bore out the reality of the position in which the Grimleys supposed her to be placed ; it being proper and customary for brides to look exceedingly miserable on their wedding morn, that the mirth of the laughing girls by whom they are surrounded may be repressed, and a mild warning given to them not to be too precipitate in committing a like indiscretion. The events of the last fortnight had caused her great uneasiness. She had been much hurt at the sudden manner in which Johnson had been desired to discontinue his attentions by her father ; indeed, she was scarcely aware to what an extent she had allowed her feelings of attachment to go, until the object of them was no longer allowed to visit at her home. Still she heard of him from her brother nearly every day, and knew that the pursuits in which he was engaged had her happiness and comfort for their ultimate end ; but now she was about to leave town, and at comparatively so short a notice as to convince her that her father and mother were anxious to break off at once all chance of the attachment being renewed. At any other time, Emma would have looked forward to her visit with extreme happiness, for she was strongly inclined to the country and its tranquil pleasures ; much more so, from her gentle nature, than to the false society and noisy excitement of the metropolis. But now, although spring was coming on, and every wild bud that the sunshine unfolded in the hedges appeared to pay joyous homage to the passers-by, by its odour and colours, she would rather have remained in suburban Islington, with all its dusty foliage and struggling attempts at rusticity.

Titus was, however, in great glee at the trip. Deeming it compulsatively incumbent upon everyone who visited the country for a short period to do nothing but try to fish all day long, he had laid in a store of rods, hooks, landing-nets, and split shot that was marvellous to behold ; and the imaginary jack which he caught the entire way from Islington to the terminus would have supplied all Billingsgate. Not but what, at the same time, he was most attentive to his sister, trying to cheer her with his remarks upon anything worth notice which they chanced to pass, or conjuring up anticipations of forthcoming rural delight. So that the diagonal section of London which they made from their house to Vauxhall did not seem so very long, in spite of the infinity of small streets whose labyrinths they threaded — little back thoroughfares, where the existence of traffic and animal life is a perfect wonder, and which are only found to have names of their own when anybody takes an ideal walk in company with a pin over a map of London, with the intention of discovering short cuts from one spot to another. At last they arrived at Nine Elms, amidst a number of other travellers just shot out from the different cabs and omnibuses about the doors of the terminus ; and then Mr. Ledbury, having procured the requisite passports, exhibited them to the police-

man at the inner gate, and reached the train, in company with his sister and his luggage—the former under his own care, and the latter in the custody of one of those attendants whom courteous travellers are never perfectly decided whether to call guards or policemen.

More travellers arrived; wicker wheelbarrows of gigantic growth rolled down the platform, with cargoes of fish-baskets and carpet-bags, which, being wanted again at early stages of the journey, were forthwith interred in the lowest depths of the luggage van, or compressed with herculean violence into the extreme recesses of inaccessible lockers. Clamorous bells rang, for no other reason that could be conceived than to afford a little calisthenic exercise to the clerks in pulling them, since nothing took place upon the alarm; newspaper boys, of impish ubiquity, rushed about all the carriages at once, in the frantic agony of several unsold copies; and, amidst all the confusion, the engine approached to be attached to the train, snorting and sneezing and wheezing, in a manner that left no doubt in the minds of the passengers of its being an ever-so-many-horse-power one; or that, moreover, the quadrupeds whose united efforts composed its force were all equally broken-winded, and suffering from severe colds. But the noise which the engine made was an important noise, as if it had been fully impressed with the arduous nature of the labours it was expected to perform; and far different in its meaning to the idle vapouring of other engines close at hand, who were screaming at different parts of the yard in an indolent and devil-may-care manner, without any perceptible end beyond their own amusement, or the desire of promoting a little conviviality in their own line amongst an admiring circle of tenders, luggage-trucks, pig-cages, and broken tram-wheels, by which they were surrounded.

At last the signal was made for starting. The "SAM SLICK" gave a pull at the tender, and the tender made a tough tug, for a tender, at the large rattling box upon wheels, full of human "fenders" of the second class, there placed to act as buffers, and take the shock of any collision or explosion from the inmates of the close carriages; and then the whole train got into motion. As the morning was fine, and the distance not very great, Titus and Emma had gone in one of the second cars, and if they had not been aware themselves that they had actually started, would soon have received the information by every other passenger saying, "Off she goes!" the term *she* being collectively applied to the whole string of trucks, vans, and carriages now in motion; which feminine appellation proved that it was not a male train. At least, so observed a jolly gentleman in a dirty mackintosh to Mr. Ledbury, at which he smiled approvingly; and that gave rise to a few more jokes about sitting with their backs to the horses, stopping for the engine to bait, giving it a feed of coke and water, with other jests of infinite humour, which anyone appears at liberty to make in similar circumstances, without the least personal risk, or the slightest chance of instant annihilation for his temerity.

On went the train—first through the precincts of the terminus, keeping its course amidst twenty different lines of rail, which crossed and interlaced until they dazzled you to look at them. Then the

houses of poor and noisome neighbourhoods came up to the very boundaries of the road, from which squalid children ran out and huzzaed, and smoke-dried artisans in back garrets looked up for an instant from their work as the train passed ; and then a few patches of blackened grass, together with small bits of ground, enclosed by green and mouldering rails producing nothing but dead stumps and oyster shells. Anon some tall chimney of a contiguous manufactory belched out its dense volumes of smoke, which tumbled over one another in clumsy gambols, and then sailed off to pollute the air of London ; this was succeeded by a few dingy gardens and unenclosed drying-grounds, from which every blade of verdure had been long since shuffled away ; then came more houses, but not so crowded or so poverty-stricken in appearance as the others, although still in rows : these gave way to detached mansions and large open fields, with high roads running through the middle of them ; and, finally, nothing appeared on either side but the hedges, meadows, and occasional cottages and farm-houses of the country.

On went the train—screaming, gasping, and roaring, now rattling under an archway, or between two lofty slopes of furze and brushwood, in many parts scorched away by the burning cinders which it flung off in its career ; and now flying along the ridge of an embankment, searing away the cattle from the pastures below, whilom undisturbed and sequestered. Passengers got out, fresh ones took their places ; and at length, with a squeal that a giant's infant might be expected to utter upon having a tooth out or burning its fingers, the engine slackened its pace, and finally producing the same pleasant sensations that arise from grinding a knife, setting a saw, or writing with a perpendicular slate pencil, the whole of the carriages drew up at the station where Titus and Emma were to alight.

Too confiding individuals, not much accustomed to travelling, are apt to imagine that the names of the various stations are so given on account of the contiguity of the towns whose appellations they bear—in fact, that the line of road, in all probability, runs up the High Street, through the churchyard, and under the market-place ; but nothing can be more delusive than this theory ; and therefore, Mr. Ledbury and his sister had still some two or three miles to go across the country before arriving at their ultimate destination. In order to do this, they availed themselves of a rustic conveyance in attendance—a carriage peculiar to the district, somewhat resembling an old coach whose hinder portion had been blown clean away by the explosion of a barrel of gunpowder in the boot, and which left the village at all sorts of curious and out-of-the-way hours to meet the trains, never starting at the same time two weeks together, and making a point of being three minutes too late every other morning. So curiously unsafe and rickety was this vehicle, which Mr. Ledbury at the first glance imagined to be constructed of card-board, pack-thread, and sealing-wax, that he was somewhat in doubt about availing himself of its accommodation ; more especially when he heard one of the natives, who was idling upon the bridge over the line, call it a flying handbox. But at length he was prevailed upon to enter, together

with Emma; and the curious machine started, after the driver had announced his intention to the public in general of so doing by blowing a few wild notes upon an ancient horn, and a barrel of oysters had broken through the roof, for which misbehaviour it was immediately consigned to the care of the "guard"—an unwashed urchin in the costume of a ploughboy of the western division of Surrey. And in about three-quarters of an hour they arrived at the end of their journey without further accident, the "guard" contentedly riding upon the spikes behind, apparently to his great joy and satisfaction.

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CHAPTER. XXXI.

OF THE DIVERTING MANNER IN WHICH THE GRIMLEYS WERE INTRODUCED TO MR. RAWKINS.

VERY little time elapsed before Jack Johnson, with his happy tact of accommodating himself to all society into which he might be thrown, was quite as much at his ease in the establishment of Mr. Rawkins as he had been at his own lodging; and, indeed, between that gentleman, Mr. Prodgers, and himself there arose such good-fellowship that, if the personator of Hercules had not been so much the senior, anyone might have involved his ideas in a maze of the most abstruse reasoning before he found out which was the master; for, in moments of conviviality, they would slap the head of the house upon the back, and call him plain "Rawkins"—nay, once Mr. Prodgers went so far as to say "old chap" to him; but this was very late one night, after the glasses had sparkled on the board some time, and they had each expressed their opinion, lyrically and unanimously, that the cock would crow and the day would dawn before the last of them should fall beside his chair.

Mr. Rawkins, as we have stated, was not a great deal at home; and on fine afternoons, during his absence, Mr. Prodgers and Jack would leave the surgery in charge of Bob, and ascend to the pigeon-trap, in order, as Mr. Prodgers would observe, "to taste the pleasures of the pewter amongst the pimney chots." And then he would beguile the time by various professional anecdotes and snatches of melody, occasionally varying the diversions by puffing tobacco-smoke into the pigeon-holes where the birds were sitting, or making them giddy by putting their heads under their wings, and swinging them round. There was also an inflated old rabbit, to whom he was in the habit of giving strong liquors, until its behaviour became exceedingly eccentric; and, having once detected the favourite cat pertaining to Mrs. Pim, who lived next door, in a predatory visit to the poultry, he had

painted her face in imitation of an *al fresco* portrait of the late Mr. Grimaldi opposite Sadler's Wells theatre : and then before it could be wiped off, had attached various tassels of gay-coloured paper to her tail, together with a few old ferret-bells, and sent her back, with the compliments of the old gentleman who lived over the way tied round her neck. During the fore-part of the day, however, Mr. Prodgers was generally at lecture, or rather gave out to the world that such was his occupation ; and then Jack remained in the surgery, attending to the patients, and conversing with Bob—at least, when Bob was not idiotic. For as that small assistant led a species of chameleon life, apparently living upon air, and never closing his eyes, his brain at times became perturbed and wandering ; and at these seasons Mr. Prodgers generally gave him two pills and a thrashing, which had always the effect of bringing him round again. And then his intellect usually came out in great force, more especially in the deliverance of moral maxims, which he had picked up during his education at the charity-school. For he had been brought up on the Chinese plan, which consists, upon the authority of the collection at Hyde Park Corner, in hanging sage precepts about the apartments, to be engraved in the early minds of youth, and having once learned a great quantity of them by heart, for which he was rewarded with the medal of superior deportment, he had a great notion of their value, and was constantly employing them. But Mr. Prodgers, observing this propensity, had laboured indefatigably to confound his notions of these proverbs, so that eventually Bob made glorious confusion of them whenever he spoke, to the great delight of bystanders in general.

Although the work which Bob got through in the establishment of Mr. Rawkins was supposed, upon a moderate computation, to be equal to that of five different servants in a large family, he contrived to snatch two or three minutes now and then from his labours for his own diversion. And he usually employed these joyous moments in singing popular negro melodies to the poultry in the back-yard, practising violent gestures to accompany them, or playing *extempore* airs upon his Clerkenwell castanets, which were composed of pieces of slate, surreptitiously procured from the roof of the dust-bin. He was also an admirable chin-melodist, could dance a horn-pipe on his head, derived a small income from the redemption of shuttlecocks and peg-tops which came down the area, whistled louder than anybody else when he went twice a year to the gallery of Sadler's Wells, and could play part of " God save the Queen " in various keys at once, by blowing into a series of empty phials ; so that altogether when his faculties were active, he was considered accomplished. His usual companions were the various living things comprising Mr. Rawkins' menagerie, between all of whom and himself there appeared to exist some curious affinity ; but his special favourite was a superannated pet leech, that he kept in a pickle-bottle full of water under his knife-board, to whom he was in the habit of addressing most of his snatches of melody and ebullitions of jocosity ; for the shed enclosing the knife-board might be considered as his own peculiar *boudoir*, being the only part of the house whose general arrangements he had the sole

right of controlling, and within its limits most of his domestic labours were accomplished.

One fine morning Mr. Prodgers did not go to lecture at his usual hour, but remained loitering about the surgery; from which it was evident that there was some attraction in anticipation to keep him at home. Jack Johnson was amusing himself by cutting up old day-books into powder papers for the poor people, and enveloping small portions of Epsom salts, ground to powder, and coloured pink, in each; and boy Bob had been furnished with a mass of uninviting composition, about the size of a bath-bun, which was to be rolled out into pills without delay for the same class of patients, and then deposited in the jar appropriated to the PIL. HUM. Mr. Prodgers himself was not working particularly hard, but had seated himself upon the counter, with his feet resting in the cork-drawer, and was now watching the operations of his companions.

"Is it possible you mean that for a pill, sir?" he exclaimed, gazing at Bob with a stern expression, and taking up a small triangular morsel of "Hum," which the small assistant had just cut off. "Now you eat that, sir, directly."

"That's four you've made me eat this morning," said Bob, looking very surly.

"What of that, sir?" demanded Mr. Prodgers, so sharply that Bob gave a leap into the air. "If you don't eat that pill this instant, Mr. Johnson shall draw one of your double teeth. I am sure your sight must be bad to make such pills as that. I shall have to take out your eyes after all, and wash them in soapsuds."

The last threat had such an effect upon Bob, that he directly bolted the offending composition, but with an expression of intense dislike.

"Don't make that face, sir," said Jack Johnson, following up his fellow-apprentice. "Recollect, there are many poor children in the street would be glad of such nice pills."

"And remember," added Prodgers, with suitable gravity, "that evil communications is the mother of invention, and that a pin a day—what did I tell you about a pin a day?"

"A pin a day is not to be caught by chaff," replied Bob, in extreme terror.

"Of course not," continued Prodgers. "How often am I to din that into your stupid ears? Now go and stand upon your head in the corner until I tell you to get down, or all your brains will run down into your heels. You'll be a perfect fool before long."

The hapless Bob had no course but to comply with the orders of his superior, and immediately turned himself over into the commanded position, from which he was not released until he had gone through "Jim along Josey," topsy-turvy, and danced an accompanying horn-pipe upside down; towards the end of which, however, he was interrupted by Mr. Prodgers, who suddenly knocked him over, kicked him into the back-room, and followed after him, exclaiming to Johnson as he closed the door—

"Here's Mrs. Stokes coming in. I leave you to enjoy the pleasure of her company."

The female who approached was one of Mr. Rawkins' chief private patients, to whom he was at all times most obsequious and attentive, for she was the wife of his baker; and, as he took out all his bills in half-quartern loaves, it was greatly to his interest to send in as much medicine as he could. She was a very woe-begone woman, of forty or thereabouts, with a white face, a red nose, a rusty faded mourning bonnet, and a large, untidy mob-cap, with her hair constantly in papers, as if awaiting some grand occasion for full dress which never came. Suffering under the combined effects of missionaries and dram-drinking, she was never perfectly well; and, what with continual attacks of indigestion, and occasional gentle fits of *delirium tremens*, the whole establishment of Mr. Rawkins was indirectly indebted to her for its daily bread.

"Well, Mrs. Stokes," said Jack, with great politeness, as the lady entered the surgery, "how are you to-day?"

"Very bad," replied the patient, after much wheezing, and laborious efforts to speak; "it's all them nasty cramps and the colds I catches in Mr. Knoek's chapel."

"We will feel the pulse, ma'am," observed Johnson, fixing his face to a professional expression. "Ah—I see—not quite right; and now let us look at the tongue—not so good as I could wish. How's the appetite?"

"Law! you know, Mr. Johnson, last Christmas twelve-month—"

"Yes, I am aware of that," replied Jack; "but I wished to know how it was at present."

"A hinfant's, Mr. Johnson—a unborn babe's is more. But Mr. Knoek says I require spirituous consolation. I have put my trust in peppermint and salvation."

"You have done quite right, ma'am," replied Jack; "and *we* will do the rest. You find the red draughts agree with you?"

"They are blessed balm," answered Mrs. Stokes, "and their effects is peace."

Talented analytical chemists might possibly have pronounced them gin-and-water coloured with tincture of cardamons.

"You shall have four more this afternoon," continued Johnson. "The others must be gone by this time."

"Do not send them," returned the lady; "what I says is, that temptation must not be thrown out to servants, for maids-of-all-work is weak, and the draughts is grateful. I will call for them."

"You will find them ready," said Jack, opening the door for the lady, and politely bowing her out, striving very hard to keep his countenance, as he caught sight of Mr. Prodgers making unearthly grimaces through the glass-door of the back-room. And as soon as she had departed, that gentleman returned to the surgery.

"I couldn't stand her again," observed Mr. Prodgers, upon entering. "The last time she came she nailed me for a penny to endow a chapel with somewhere in the South Seas. It was not much,

to be sure, if that sum was all they wanted for the purpose; but she's always up to dodges of the same kind."

"Do you think she makes it answer?" asked Jack.

"Rather," returned the other. "If ever I should have a house of my own, the first article of furniture I established should be a box for missionary penny-pieces. I'd warrant it to pay the taxes. Here's Rawkins coming. Now for the lunch."

The cause of Mr. Prodgers' choosing to remain at home on this particular morning, instead of going to lecture, may now be divulged.

The respected head of the establishment, from his love of athletic exercises, had been led into making a wager with some *habitué* of the neighbouring tavern that he would run a given space in a certain time; but as he was not in first-rate condition for such an undertaking, he had devoted certain periods of the morning to training, under the directions of a professor of self-defence. Mr. Prodgers, whose friends resided in the country, had received a day or two before a goodly hamper of pork-pies, fowls, and black-puddings from the agricultural district; and in consequence had requested Mr. Rawkins to bring back the trainer to lunch with him when their diurnal task was concluded. The medical Hercules immediately fell into the views of his assistant—even going so far as to promise some champagne, which he could procure from the landlady, to whom he was paying his addresses, at the lowest possible rate, and begging that Hoppy, the bird-faneier, might be included in the invitation, he being regarded somewhat in the light of a link between the live stock and human inhabitants of the establishment.

Although the day was somewhat close and oppressive, Mr. Rawkins entered his surgery enveloped in an enormous great-coat, of a shaggy white fabric, similar to those formerly worn by watchmen, with a variety of comforters twined round his neck, of several colours and fashions, nearly concealing his face, so that he looked somewhat as if he was about to sit on the box of a cab all day long, in a heavy rain.

The gentleman of the ring, who accompanied him, was a thick-set fellow, with small eyes, high cheek-bones, thick lips, and cropped hair, of especially siang appearance, dressed in a coarse cut-away coat and drab gaiters. He had evidently met with an accident similar to that of Juliet when she was young, for his features were as flattened as if he had fallen down upon his face very violently—with so much force, indeed, that they had never recovered their proper outline. The trio was completed by Hoppy limping after them as fast as his lameness would allow, with a live rabbit of a peculiar "lop" in each of his shooting-coat pockets, whose increasing struggles and convulsions were the occasion of much marvel and more compliments from such little boys as were passing at the time.

"Well, Prodgers," said Mr. Rawkins, as soon as he had disencumbered himself of sufficient clothing to allow him to speak, "well, Prodgers, what has happened—any good accident—fracture—eh?"

"Nothing particular, sir," was the reply.

"Um! I suppose so. Hang the children! I can't tell what's come to them; they never tumble into the fires, or under the cabs, or down the stairs, as they used to do; one would think they didn't do it on purpose."

The parish paid extra for casualties, which accounted for Mr. Rawkins' discontent.

"Mrs. Stokes has been here," said Johnson. "She wants four more draughts of the 'Spiritus Juniperi Comp.,' and will call for them by-and-by."

"Very good," replied Mr. Rawkins. "Suppose you make it six. The bread-bill will be heavy this week, and I shall want some ground-bait on Friday. The extra three shillings will cover it."

"Bob!" shouted Mr. Prodgers, in a voice that immediately commanded the presence of the attendant, "where are the clean phials?"

"There ain't none," answered Bob; "I hadn't time to shot 'em."

"Then you ought to have had," continued Prodgers; "you should get up early, and take time by the pullock. Remember, the early bird never boils, and procrastination is the soul of business."

"We can send a mixture instead," said Johnson; "I can wash out this Reading-sauce bottle in a minute."

"No, no—by no means," returned Rawkins; "don't put her up to it. The minute people find that a three-shilling mixture holds more than four eighteen-penny phials, they put the skid on the draughts: wait for the little bottles."

After having delivered himself of this elegant speech, Mr. Rawkins inducted his friends into the back surgery, whilst Johnson and Prodgers put up the medicine, directed it, and finally kicked Bob from one to the other for five minutes, upon wringing from him a confession that he had given away a bottle to a man at the door, in exchange for three yards of new and popular compositions in verse, adapted for music; the particular lyric which had tempted him to this act of dishonesty being the account of an individual with a peculiarly tremulous name, whose powers of absorbing caloric were exceedingly limited.

These things being concluded, Jack and his associate joined the company in the consulting-room; and the cloth having been laid by the housemaid, Mr. Rawkins brought forth the champagne. Hoppy was accommodated with his accustomed seat near the fire, and a pot of porter, which he affirmed to be superior "to any champagne as ever was bred;" and Mr. Chorkey Dags, professor of self-defence, being looked upon by Mr. Rawkins as a superior member of society, was allowed the tooth-drawing chair, by way of distinction.

For the first ten minutes of the repast there was very little conversation, for everybody was better engaged; but when their appetites had been somewhat satisfied, the company gradually became exceedingly noisy—the professor of self-defence chiefly entertaining them with various gladiatorial reminiscences, which it is not worth while here to chronicle. And then, from the conversational style of amusement, they came to the enigmatical, in which Mr. Dags was a remarkable proficient. He broke tobacco-pipes into small pieces, and

with the fragments thereof worked out deep problems of foxes going over rivers, with geese and pecks of oats, in boats of deficient capacity ; and then he conjured with the bowls of the pipes, and a calomel pill that had been made a long time, in the manner of the pea and thimble ; and getting more confidential, exposed the different methods made use of by dishonest people to insure success in tossing up a coin, and speculating upon its obverse and reverse as it descends ; together with many other crafty manœuvres, which came under his category of "dodges," all to the great delight of the company, especially Bob, who looked upon him as a great magician, and could not take his eyes from him.

"What are you about, sir?" cried Mr. Prodgers, breaking his glass by accident, and immediately boxing Bob's ears for doing it, to divert attention.

"Where are you driving to now?" exclaimed Johnson, giving him a *contre-coup*, which drove him in a different direction.

"You are always breaking something or another," said Mr. Rawkins, dealing the devoted Bob a third blow, which knocked him into a tea-chest rabbit-hutch, wherein he remained firmly wedged.

"You are too good to him, Rawkins," said Mr. Prodgers, getting slightly familiar, from the juice of the grape, or gooseberry, as the case might have been. "He knows right reckonings corrupt good manners, and imposes upon it. Get up, sir!"

But this Bob was perfectly unable to do ; and so, as he was quite out of everybody's way, they left him, and went on with their entertainment. Mr. Rawkins, who always led the conversation round to muscular activity and feats of strength, began to show his power in squeezing the top of a pewter pot into an ellipse with his hand, and defying others to open his fist when he had closed it. Then he took off his dressing-gown, and commenced a display of gymnastics with the aid of the staples and hooks driven into the walls and ceiling ; and whilst he was doing this, Mr. Dags persuaded Johnson to put on a pair of boxing-gloves, and have a spar with him. Mr. Prodgers and Hoppy took their places on each side of the fire-place, with a couple of pipes, and the beer on the hob ; so that altogether the room presented as singular a spectacle for the house of a medical man as any one could well conceive. But Mr. Rawkins stood alone in the profession for peculiarity.

On this very day, and at this particular time, Mrs. Grimley and her daughter were wending their way from the heights of Islington towards the street in which Mr. Rawkins had pitched his dwelling, or rather the roof of his pigeonries. Their business was a mission of charity ; for Miss Grimley, finding that offers became scarcer every day, and that marrying young men appeared, in her opinion at least, to be gradually disappearing from the face of the earth, had taken up tracts and canary-birds as a last resource, steadfastly refusing all invitations, even of the mildest kind, in Passion Week, and making great numbers of list tippets and worsted mits for inferior children. She had also joined a district society for visiting poor people at their own houses, and seeing what they wanted, which, as the wants were

never supplied, was an amusing occupation, at a small outlay; and she kept a circulating library of serious pamphlets, which she was good enough to lend to any of her flock who would keep them clean and bring them back again. So that she was pronounced an amiable young woman by the senior ladies of Islington, as well as an estimable young person, and a girl of great sense. On the morning in question she had started with her mother to make one of her usual rounds, calling upon the baker's wife, Mrs. Stokes, for some local information; for she felt a great veneration towards the house of Stokes, and dealt with it for bread, although the shop was some distance from their abode; because Mr. Stokes, acting under the wishes of his wife, only displayed religious announcements in his window, to the exclusion of all play-bills and other unseemly placards, which proceeding met with the highest encouragement from the Grimleys, albeit they had whilom inclined to private theatricals. But, as the religion of display and the religion of the heart are two sentiments entirely opposed to each other, this apparent paradox is not to be wondered at.

We have stated that Mr. Rawkins was always remarkably polite and subdued towards Mrs. Stokes, seeing that she was a good patient, and the bread of the household depended upon her indisposition; and consequently Mrs. Stokes held the medical man in high estimation, she being comparatively blind to his eccentricities, and always recommended him whenever it lay in her power. So that, being unable upon the present occasion to give the Grimleys all the information they desired, she volunteered to conduct and introduce them to Mr. Rawkins, who, being the parish doctor, would most probably know all about it; at the same time hinting that, should they ever think of changing their present medical attendant, she knew of no one more eligible than her favourite, whose excellent treatment of her indigestions she lauded to the highest point.

Mrs. and Miss Grimley accepted her offer, as it would introduce them to a practitioner whose mind was properly regulated: and they set off together towards his house. No one was in the shop when they entered; but sounds of exertion proceeded from the back surgery, as well as occasional cries, which they at first imagined to arise from the consecutive extraction of teeth from many patients. But Mrs. Grimley, finding no notice taken of the signal made by tapping her parasol upon the counter, was about to advance and repeat it rather louder, when a sudden scuffle was heard, the door appeared to be burst open with some violence, and Mr. Chorkey Dags threw a back somersault into the shop, finally plumping down on the floor at the feet of the terror-stricken visitors, whither he had been driven by a sudden and well-planted blow from Jack Johnson, who now stood in the doorway, without his coat, and wearing the gloves, his face flushed and his hair disordered, from the amicable contest he had been engaged in. Mr. Proddgers and Hoppy were still sitting on either side of the fireplace watching the scientific display of the two *athleta*; and Bob, whom nobody had thought fit to release from the private box which he had taken all to himself, was very contentedly looking

on from the rabbit-hutch, and surreptitiously devouring part of a pork-pie in the confusion.

But where was Mr. Rawkins?—for as the eyes of the scared visitors had first been directed by circumstances to the ground, they did not at once perceive him; and when they did, they were more bewildered than ever. Half-way up the side of the room, grasping two large staples, and with his body thrown out by powerful muscular force at right-angles from the wall, in the manner of those remarkable individuals who enact monkeys and strong men at the minor theatres, was Mr. Rawkins, in a position which would have qualified him to assume the name of a Persian Impossible, a Caoutchouc Convolutionist, an Egyptian Brother, or any other title he might have chosen to adopt.

To this rapid action succeeded a perfect immovability of all parties, from the combined influences of terror, surprise, and want of breath, forming an extempore *tableau vivant* of the most original composition, which those who delight in such dull and wearisome enactments would have been much gratified at beholding. Mr. Rawkins was the only exception to the statue-like deportment of the others; for, not being aware of the presence of strangers, and, above all, of the pious Mrs. Stokes, he was still posturing in his elevated position, flinging his legs about to display the flexibility and power of his joints, and just upon the point of requesting Mr. Prodgers to hang a fourteen-pound weight upon his calves; but as soon as he perceived Mrs. Stokes and two other ladies, he dropped from his laborious attitude as if he had been shot and scuffling on his dressing gown, advanced towards them.

“Ha! Mrs. Stokes, I am glad to see you,” he exclaimed, with most ready assurance. “Ladies—pray be under no alarm—you have called at the hour of our professional studies. I fear we have somewhat startled you.”

There was certainly very just ground for the alarm of Mr. Rawkins. The visitors had not yet recovered themselves sufficiently to speak.

“We demonstrate each day at one,” continued Mr. Rawkins, “the power of the animal fibre in the muscular *fascicula*. Such practical examples are worth an age of lectures. Mr. Johnson, Mr. Prodgers—gentlemen—we will close the class for this morning.

And gently urging the professor of self-defence into the back surgery, he closed the door, shutting all the rest in with him, and begged to know to what circumstance he was indebted for the honour of this visit. This was soon stated, when the ladies had recovered themselves sufficiently to speak, which, however, was not for some minutes, whilst Mr. Rawkins was equally breathless from his late exertions. At length, when they had gained the necessary information, after the head of the establishment had consulted his assistant, to whom the care of the parochial patients was principally entrusted, they took their departure, leaving Mrs. Stokes to get her medicine and detail some fresh ailment to Mr. Rawkins.

“What an extraordinary scene, my love!” said Mrs. Grimley, feeling a little reassured at being once more in the street.

“Very, mamma,” replied her daughter. “Do you think they were all tipsy, or really studying?”

“I am sure I can’t tell, my dear,” returned Mrs. Grimley; but I am glad we have found out how that Mr. Johnson employs his time. He appeared ashamed to speak to us.”

This was in reality not the case; for Jack had not recognised the ladies in the bustle of the moment.

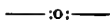
“How angry the Ledburys will be if they know we have discovered where their favourite lives!—for I suppose he lives there,” said Miss Grimley.

“And what news it will be for Mrs. Huddle! You must go in this evening, Jane, and tell her all about it.”

“Emma Ledbury need not plume herself so upon her conquest,” said Miss Grimley, with a toss of her head. “She does not appear to have got any such great catch, after all.”

“I think not,” said Mrs. Grimley; “but I always said I thought him a very wild young man. Mrs. Ledbury is such a thorough manœuvrer, it will serve them right if it all turns out very badly; and I shall not be sorry if it does.”

And having delivered themselves of these friendly sentiments, which contained their own creed of their duty towards their neighbour, Mrs. and Miss Grimley proceeded on their mission of religion and charity; no doubt thanking Providence that *their* minds at least were actuated by pure and disinterested motives.



CHAPTER XXXII.

WHICH TREATS OF THE COUNTRY CONNECTIONS OF THE LEDBURYS.

THE village of Clumpley, to which Titus had escorted his sister, was pleasantly situated upon the banks of the Thames, about a score of miles from London, and during the summer formed a great place of resort for numbers of gentlemen, who thought the extreme of earthly happiness was obtained by sitting in a punt all day long and watching a bit of painted cork float along the water. It was a picturesque, quiet place; not on any high road from any town of importance to any other, so that its commercial interest was chiefly confined to its own limits, as well as the ideas of its inhabitants, in the casual fashion of small country towns. But, whilst places of greater pretensions in the neighbourhood had become bankrupt, from the decline of coaches on their line and increase of railways, Clumpley flourished from those very circumstances; for the neighbouring station opened a very ready communication with the metropolis, and brought visitors down from town who were not previously aware that there was such a place in existence.

The chief feature in the topography of Clumpley was certainly the High Street; for in this thoroughfare most of the traffic of the community took place, and within its boundaries were comprised all the public buildings of the village; the most important next to the church, being the Literary and Scientific Institution, which frowned with classic severity upon the public-house opposite, silently reproaching the frequenters. Most of the professions, too, resided in High Street, the law taking precedence in point of wealth, and medicine standing first as regarded numbers; and as there were four medical men in the village, which was of reasonable size, and none of them spoke to the other, each had his own followers, and the society was thus divided into as many sets, whose transactions furnished constant amusement for each other. Of course there was not an inhabitant whose income and expenditure was not generally known and canvassed; and when strangers entered the village they caused much excitement, for the people ran to the doors to see them pass, and afterwards collected into little knots to discuss the probable cause of their arrival. On fair and market days, however, strange faces did not cause any very great excitement; for then burly men in top-boots entered the village in numbers from the wild adjacent districts, only known to the doctors' assistants and relieving officers. Some rode large-boned horses, and came alone; others drove portions of their family in sturdy chaise-carts, and these were left in long rows in front of the inn, to the great joy and diversion of the little boys, who climbed into all of them by turns, and drove imaginary horses, until scared away by the ostler. There was a branch stage-coach that ran through Clumpley to some unimportant place, which appeared to have been overlooked in the general extermination of such vehicles; and its arrival to change horses was a great epoch in the transactions of the day. The passengers which it carried—seldom more than two or three—were regarded by the inhabitants as travellers of peculiar enterprise; and if a parcel was left at the inn for anyone in the village, it served those who were not lucky enough to see the address to talk about all day long, as to who it could be for, what it contained, and where it came from.

The Literary and Scientific Institution, above alluded to, might be considered as the Bourse, or Exchange of Clumpley—not in a mercantile point of view, but as a spot where the inhabitants were accustomed to meet from various parts of the village, and sometimes from the adjacent hamlets. The museum attached to this establishment was highly interesting, and filled with curiosities, which sometimes included the visitors. Everybody in the neighbourhood had been requested to contribute something when it was first started; and, accordingly, those whose houses were limited for space looked upon it as a safety-valve to get rid of all superfluous rubbish. First of all came, as a matter of course, models of canoes, and bows and arrows, with spears and paddles, from the South Seas, presented by the old captain who lived out on the Green. Then arrived some stuffed birds and plaster busts, with three volumes of the Poor Law Reports, and a clothes-basket full of minerals and fossils that nobody understood.

But when these various things came to be admired, and small labels attached to them blazoned forth the names of the donors, the inhabitants began endeavouring to outvie each other in the value of their presents, and poured their choicest curiosities into the museum with lavish generosity; not always without occasional wishes, when the enthusiasm was over, that they had them back again.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilmer, at whose house Emma was about to stay upon her country visit, were connections of Mrs. Ledbury, worthy and comfortable people, with two children, a son and a daughter, about the same ages as Titus and his sister. The old folks did not often go to town, no persuasions having up to the present time ever proved sufficient to get Mrs. Wilmer upon the railway, the train of which, she imagined, was a species of enormous rocket, that went off with a *whisk!* and shot the passengers from one station to another. Mr. Wilmer occasionally paid a visit to the metropolis at regular intervals to look after his dividends, and was now and then seen at Mark Lane; but this was the extent of his peregrinations. Neither were the visits to town of his son, Mr. John Wilmer, more frequent; for he was a sportsman, and found few pleasures in London accordant with his own tastes; but the daughter, Fanny, was in the habit of going to stay every year with the Ledburys—an excursion she always looked forward to with the greatest delight. And, indeed, upon these occasions her parents always had very great trouble in getting her back again, for when a day was fixed upon for her return, some party or excursion always arose, that rendered it necessary for her to stay some few days longer. And upon these occasions, Fanny Wilmer was accustomed to be in a great flurry about her dress—what she could wear, and which mode was most in vogue—always prevailing upon Emma to go shopping with her, as she did not like to trust to her own taste in London, although at Clumpley she usually set the fashion. Altogether, indeed, she had a great opinion of Emma's acquirements, and usually looked to her for instructions in carriage and demeanour, all of which she carefully followed; so that Jack Johnson, who had now and then met her at Ledbury's, said she was not altogether so rustic in her manners as some of the provincial beauties he had occasionally met, seeing that she knew how to waltz, and could sit down properly. For Jack observed in confidence, to Titus, that he could usually tell the country girls when they entered a room; they generally settled down upon a seat at once, as soon as they had been received, and appeared glad of the refuge the chair afforded: whereas the London young ladies always looked calmly about them, and spread their dress out very carefully before they sank gently upon the rout seats, in order that it might possess no unseemly creases upon rising. Fanny Wilmer had, moreover, a shade of blue in her composition, for which she was indebted to the lectures at the scientific institution above mentioned. But the azure tint was like the same colour upon one of the dissolving views—very transparent, and never obtrusive; indeed, she sometimes used to wish that the Ledburys had taken her more to the opera, and less to the Polytechnic Institution, that she might have been able to talk to her partners about Giselle and the Puritani as well as the other

young ladies. Nevertheless, she always spent a very pleasant evening, and the description of the supper, and the party in general, used to serve her to talk about for weeks after she ultimately got home. And when she had talked the subject out to her own family, she recapitulated it all to the Mrs. Hoddle of the neighbourhood—for there is a Mrs. Hoddle residing in all country towns, who collects and retails all the news, and, despite the quarrels of medical men and the bickerings of the small gentilities, is on friendly terms of visiting with everybody.

As the peculiar carriage before mentioned drew up at the gate of Mr. Wilmer's house, the old gentleman came out to welcome his visitors, and the ladies remained at the windows, perpetrating a series of smiles and nods that would have done honour to a mandarin—Fanny being at one, and Mrs. Wilmer at the other, in a cap so beautiful that you would scarcely have thought it possible to group so many artificial flowers upon so small a space of net and wire. When the two servants, assisted by the driver and the guard who had ridden upon the spikes behind, had got all the luggage from the fly, Mr. Wilmer escorted his visitors to the parlour, where a hearty welcome burst from the family assembled; indeed, Mr. John Wilmer seized Titus's hand with a grasp that numbed his fingers for ten minutes afterwards. And then, after the first greetings, and particular inquiries after the health of everybody, and punctual delivery of the kind loves and regards which had been sent, Emma withdrew with Fanny to divest herself of her travelling costume, and have a long conversation of secrets, after the manner of young ladies in general; and the old gentleman drew Titus into the garden, to show him the great improvements that had taken place in the disposition of the cucumber-beds since last year; of which, as Titus had not the least recollection how they were placed before, he, of course, expressed much admiration at their altered state. And next, John showed him the old mare, who was being blistered, and the new cow, and the wheelbarrow he had built himself, and the tame pheasant with the poultry, all of which objects elicited Mr. Ledbury's warmest approbation. But when he heard that at the ensuing races there was a chance of Miss Seymour, the *contadina* of the "Antediluvians," being asked to stay at Mr. Wilmer's, with whom he was aware she was acquainted, and that he also would be expected, his gratification was most unbounded, for the valentine and the ball had formed an epoch in Mr. Ledbury's life—the establishment of a lock and weir in the river of his thoughts, turning their stream into another channel, and causing much commotion.

It was not long before dinner re-assembled the family, and then, for the first time, Mr. Wilmer informed Titus of the treat in store for that evening. It appeared that the Clumpley Institution possessed a library—that is to say, an extensive series of book-shelves; but as the funds of the establishment, in company with other scientific societies, were not very flourishing, there was no money to buy books. In consequence of this circumstance, the committee had put forth an appeal to the world, which had been answered by various learned gentlemen

volunteering to lecture for nothing—at least upon their mere expenses being paid them—in order that the receipts might be applied to the purchase of books; and the first meeting was to take place that evening, when the lecture-room would be once more opened, after having remained in undisturbed tranquillity for some time. There were to be experiments with the gases, and chemical transformations; tricks with the air-pump, and dissolving views; electro-type, and galvanic batteries—in fact, all sorts of entertaining sights; for the Institution possessed some very good apparatus, presented to it in one of the enthusiastic fits of generosity above alluded to, by a former inhabitant of the town—although, unfortunately, nobody now knew how to use it. Mr. Wilmer was one of the committee, as also was Mr. John, and they had promised to use their endeavours to get up a large party, so that the arrival of Titus and his sister was most opportune, at the same time that the lecture provided some little amusement for their visitors.

After dinner, Emma was prevailed upon to play some new quadrilles upon the old-fashioned six-octave square piano, which had been an inhabitant of Clumpley for many years; and next she played the annual duet with Miss Wilmer, which they always performed when they were together, being a popular arrangement of "Cease your funning," with variations. After a great deal of pressing, they got Titus to sing, which with him was always a very rare occurrence, his talent in that line being very latent, and only fostered by the encouraging idea that he was in the country, where people were not so addicted to quizzing as in London. But, nevertheless, he succeeded tolerably well in the lyrical expression of the desire he felt to be a butterfly, which was one of the most modern songs they found in the music canterbury; although Miss Wilmer, who accompanied him, occasionally got a little before him, and did not rest sufficiently at the pauses to give it proper effect. Mr. Wilmer sat under the verandah, for it was a very fine afternoon, upon a most uncomfortable seat made of crooked boughs, smoking a pipe in company with his son, who, however, could not relish anything but cigars; and Mrs. Wilmer made tea, and thanked everybody for playing and singing, as soon as they had finished, and sometimes before, which was rather awkward. However, they were all very happy, and the time passed pleasantly enough until the hour arrived for them to go to the Institution, when they set off, Mr. John Wilmer most proud to have Emma Ledbury as his companion, more especially when he considered the sensation her new London spring-fashion bonnet would cause upon entering the lecture-room. And Mr. John himself was a fine young man, whom many match-making mammas looked at with anxious eyes as a most eligible suitor for their daughters. But Emma did not fully appreciate the enviable situation in which she was placed; for as they sauntered along the village towards the Institution, breathing the sweet fresh air of the country, and looking at the green May foliage and the clear sky, she was thinking much more of Jack Johnson in the close gloomy doctor's shop in Clerkenwell.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE OPENING OF THE CLUMPLEY LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTION.

It was a great day for Clumpley on which the gas was first introduced there by the enterprise of the townspeople. The whole place on that eventful evening was in one fever of excitement. Little boys followed the lamplighter with unceasing huzzas, and cheered louder than ever as each jet of light burst forth from the lamp; sober inhabitants left their houses, and walked about the streets as though they had been at Vauxhall; suppers were cooked by gas at the manufactory; and there was a report that the directors and contractors all feasted together inside the gasometer, which obtained universal credence, inasmuch as several of the guests were very much indisposed the next day, which they attributed solely to the noxious vapours of the hydrogen floating in their banquet-room. Previously to this eventful change, the only lights in the village had been two oil-lamps over the doors of the chief inns, and one at the establishment of the principal medical man; but as the two first were always extinguished at eleven o'clock, and the last usually went out by itself about the same time, from the circumstance of the owner's persisting in using some new gimcrack invention, that was to give ten times the light of ordinary oil at a quarter the cost, which never answered, the streets were in darkness throughout the night. This, however, was of little consequence; for the Clumpleyites were an early people, usually retiring to bed about half-past ten, at which time any belated individual walking down the village might observe all the lights in the upper windows of the houses now and then popping out very suddenly, as the inmate sought his French bed. And after this nobody was about, nor was any sound heard except the sheep-bells on the distant pastures, and the night-bells at the contiguous doctors.

The excitement of the gas had not quite finished when Mr. Ledbury and Emma arrived at the village, and a demonstration of its nature and properties was to be one of the principal features of the evening's lecture. As they approached the Institution, they perceived a great throng of company wending their way towards it, most of whom were greeted by Mr. Wilmer and his family. First of all came up the young ladies from Theresa House Academy, on the old London road, walking two and two, and admitted upon payment of sixpence each, when they displayed the most extraordinary diplomacy in getting as far away from the teachers as they could. Then arrived the preparatory school for young gentlemen from six to twelve, who entered somewhat less orderly, and divided the hour usually appointed to the lectures into ten minutes of attention, ten minutes of wriggling about, ten minutes of squabbling *sotto voce*, and the remaining half hour

in sleep. The seats on the first row were reserved for the committee and their friends, most of whom were present, including the Wilmer detachment of spectators; and the body of the lecture-room was filled with those who were subscribers, as well as many other visitors who were not. The museum and library had been brushed up and set off to the best advantage, by the indefatigable librarian, who was now taking the tickets, to entice new supporters; and the table in the lecture-room was covered with a green baize, bound with yellow, and presented by the ladies of Clumpley, on which were displayed all the apparatus for the lecture, some of which were so singular in appearance, that the less-informed of the company were for a time divided in their opinions, as to whether they had come to see an exhibition of conjuring or philosophy. And after these curious things, the chief objects of attention were Emma Ledbury and Titus; who, being strangers, were therefore capable of producing a great sensation in a country place like Clumpley, not exceeded by the emotion caused when the Fitzfabrics—the great people of the village, who found scarcely anybody good enough to visit in the neighbourhood—entered the room, and took their seats upon the benches, just like ordinary persons.

At length all the company had arrived, and at eight o'clock the secretary appeared at the table, and was received with much applause—the old gentlemen of the committee on the front seats agitating their gaiters, and using their umbrellas with much effect.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” observed the secretary, who, not being habituated to oratorical display, was somewhat nervous at addressing so large an assembly—“Ladies and gentlemen, I am happy in being able to announce the following donations to the library and museum.”
(*Hear! hear!*)

“Mr. Shumbanks—a bottle of Isle of Wight sand, with a view of the Needles; some cinders of bank-notes; and an oyster-shell from the *Royal George*.”

These were interesting curiosities, and were welcomed accordingly.

“Mr. Jones—three volumes of the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1745-6; the second volume of an *Encyclopædia*, from CAP to OPS; a large bust, name unknown; and some pieces of granite.

“Mr. Galley, Dr. Papworth's pupil—skeleton of a cat's head; thunderbolt found in a cow's heart; a tooth supposed to have belonged to Julius Caesar; and a working model of the guillotine, with a criminal to match.”

Mr. Galley was rather a favourite, having promised to give the society a lecture upon popular physiology, and therefore these presents elicited much applause. The secretary now appeared as if about to make a communication of extra importance.

“The young ladies of Theresa House,” he continued—“Two transfer fire-screens for the library: some perforated card flower-baskets; two book-marks, worked with ‘*souvenir*’ and ‘*l'amitié*’ in silk and gold; some worsted rugs for the curiosities; a butterfly penwiper, and a drawing of the Institution.”

Hereat was a great sensation; the young gentlemen clapped their

hands, and the young ladies blushed; whilst the governesses looked blandly round, but with a proper expression of pride, as much as to say, "See what can be done at our academy!"

These, with a few more similar bequests, completed the list of donations, and then the secretary begged to introduce the lecturer to the audience. Whereupon he dived into a back room and immediately returned, leading forth a gentleman in black, with his hair curled, and wristbands turned up, whom he marshalled into the room as Mr. Wilson, of London. Mr. Ledbury, who was on one of the front benches, directly thought he had seen him before. He mentioned this circumstance to Emma, whose memory of faces was somewhat remarkable and to her he was indebted for the information which he saw was correct as soon as it was given. There was no mistake at all about the matter—the gentleman who came forward to address the company was Mr. Roderick Doo! And of this he was furthermore convinced when that ubiquitous individual, upon advancing to the table, caught sight of Titus and his sister. For a moment he started; but then, recovering his placidity, bowed very graciously to them both, upon which the remainder of the audience immediately set Mr. Wilmer's visitors down as people of importance, from their being on such familiar terms with a London lecturer.

When the applause had subsided, after Mr. Doo had bent several times very gracefully to the company, he commenced the lecture with an easy assurance at which Mr. Ledbury was perfectly astonished.

After a short preliminary address, in which he spoke of the sun of knowledge dispelling the mists of ignorance, through the medium of institutions like the present, at which the committee looked very approvingly, as well as hinted at the proud star that Clumpley had become in the scientific hemisphere, since it had sent a representative to eat and drink at the British Association, and paralyse that learned body by his paper in section Q, upon "The Totality of Dependence in Phrenology and Fireworks upon Metaphysical Electricity," wherein such powerful arguments were adduced in support of the theory that no one was able to refute them in the slightest manner—after this, he proceeded to state that he should divide the lecture into two parts; the first consisting of various experiments with the gases and other agents, and the second comprising the celebrated Dissolving Views. He also added that, as he should need some trifling assistance in the course of his experiments, he was happy to see in front of the table a talented gentleman of his acquaintance—Professor Ledbury, of the learned societies—whose valuable aid he should be too happy to secure. Mr. Ledbury started, and turned very red, when he first heard his name mentioned; but, calculating upon distinguishing himself, which was always a great point with him, he yielded to Mr. Doo's solicitations, and took his place at his side amidst the applause of the audience to whom he made an imposing obeisance. And indeed, as Emma remarked to Mr. Wilmer—who felt much temporary gratification at their visitor being so celebrated a person—with his spectacles and mild expression of countenance, he looked very like a philosopher.

On the table in front of Mr. Doo was a large array of wide-mouthed stoppered bottles, apparently full of nothing, but which in reality contained various gases, that he had been preparing in the lecturer's room during the day in a mysterious manner; and by the aid of sundry gunbarrels, wash-tubs, and bladders, to the intense bewilderment of the librarian, who could not conceive what they were intended for; but settled it at last by putting down Mr. Doo as the Wizard of the North getting ready the celebrated gun-delusion, of which he was more firmly convinced when that gentleman drew a Union-jack handkerchief from his pocket, and asked the librarian if he could procure him a guinea-pig or a small rabbit, all of which things, he was aware, were in great request with necromancers in general.

Oxygen—the universal sheet-anchor of all lecturers at scientific institutions—was the first element chosen by Mr. Doo for his experiments; and, to give proper effect to them, the lights were put half down by the librarian, who sat in the corner of the room, and turned a handle connected with the gas-meter. First of all, Mr. Doo lighted a match, which he blew out, and introduced into a bottle of gas, when it was immediately rekindled with a vivid flame. This was much applauded; but when he inserted a piece of incandescent charcoal into another bottle which sparkled into a thousand coruscations, like a brilliant squib, the delight of the boys was so great that they could not contain their approbation, until sundry cuffs and boxes from the usher, resounded through the semi-obscurity of the lecture-room. Upon this, order was once more restored, and they were again quiet, except Master Wheeler, an ill-conducted lad, who, having first imitated the ascent of a sky-rocket with his mouth, and next thrown a piece of chewed paper at Mr. Ledbury's spectacles, was finally discovered, and treated with several thwacks of a cane across the shoulders as a preliminary to farther punishment when he got home; which, however, did not prevent him from kissing his hand the next minute to the half-boarder at Theresa House: in which rude act he was detected by the English teacher, who immediately desired Miss Chapman, the half-boarder in question, to come and sit by her side, where she remained, in extreme *surveillance*, during the remainder of the lecture.

Hydrogen was next touched upon by Mr. Doo, who, with the assistance of Mr. Ledbury, inflated a small balloon over the gas-pipe, which ascended rapidly to the ceiling, and kept there stationary, and from which no looks nor intimidations could withdraw the eyes of the boys, who gazed at it unceasingly, to see what it would do next. This led to a short dissertation upon atmospheric voyages; and Mr. Doo drew the attention of the audience to a diagram somewhat resembling a flying wheelbarrow, which he said was a machine of his own invention for aerial travelling; and when he explained its manner of action it appeared in every way worthy of Mr. Doo's peculiar talents; and perfectly convinced Mr. Ledbury, in his enthusiasm, that the ingenious projector, in spite of the many skilful and renowned people who bore his name, was the greatest Doo that ever lived.

"It is impossible," said the supposed professor, "to form the least

idea of the triumphs in celestial science which this apparatus will achieve. The moon will become another portion of our boundless empire; and all the twinkling stars—which even from infancy, when our hopes and fears were to each other known, have attracted our attention, and made us wonder what they are, all above the heavens so high, like a diamond in the sky—will export their choicest products to our favoured isle.”

The pathos, national pride, and domestic sympathy of this short address came home to the hearts of all present, and they cheered the lecturer warmly, two or three of the committee seriously dislocating their umbrellas in the excitement of their applause. And so much had the professor's speech warmed them up to the subject, that we firmly believe if he had stated he was about to construct one of his machines in reality, and required innumerable shareholders to bring it to perfection, that several speculators then present would immediately have put down their names as part proprietors of the certain profits that would accrue from this wonderful invention. The whole affair was so plausible, so simple (in the diagram), and altogether, to a person of the smallest mechanical knowledge, so likely to succeed at the very first glance, that there was no doubt of the old-fashioned balloons being entirely superseded. And, indeed, Mr. Doo stated that a Mr. Green was one of his staunchest patrons—which perfectly convinced the audience, conceiving it to be Mr. Green, the celebrated aeronaut, of the importance of the invention. But on this point Mr. Ledbury alone was not quite sanguine; for he knew that, from time immemorial, the Doos had always relied upon the Greens for their chief support.

“The next gas to which I shall direct your attention,” said the professor, returning to his lecture, “is called carbonic acid: it is a very heavy gas, as you perceive.”

But of this the audience were not so perfectly assured, as Mr. Doo merely appeared to be pouring an imaginary fluid from one empty ale-glass into another.

“It is destructive,” he continued, “to flame and animal life, which, if the ladies wish, I will immediately demonstrate by stifling a rabbit in a vessel of it.”

Of course the ladies did not desire this proof; and, as Mr. Doo had no rabbit, it was so far fortunate.

“Professor Ledbury will now assist me in showing the power of this gas over flame. You perceive I take this lighted taper, and you will see that, when I introduce it into this bottle of carbonic acid, it will be extinguished as suddenly as if it was plunged under water.”

Mr. Ledbury, happy to distinguish himself, received the bottle of gas with an important air, and held it towards the lecturer, whilst Mr. Doo lighted a small piece of taper and held it to the mouth of the bottle. But no sooner was the stopper removed than a bright flash of light, accompanied by a bang which shook the building to its very foundation, scared the astounded audience. Mr. Doo leapt with convulsive energy to the other side of the table; Mr. Ledbury was knocked backwards into a large tub of water which answered the

purpose of a pneumatic trough; and the librarian, who directed the gas, turned it suddenly off in his fright, amidst the screams of young ladies, the huzzas of the boys—who thought it was part of the experiment, and took advantage of the dark to kick up what noise they liked, without fear of discovery—and the general bewilderment of the whole assembly.

The greatest confusion ensued, and the professor for some time vainly endeavoured to make himself heard amidst the tumult. At length a light was obtained from a spirit-lamp that was burning upon the table, and the gas was soon rekindled, when the company were reassured, seeing Mr. Ledbury and the professor still alive, and not blown into small fragments as they had anticipated, but in full possession of their energies—the former gentleman wringing his coat-tails, and Mr. Doo preparing to address the assembly. A few words explained the accident, in which it appeared that the lecturer, instead of carbonic acid, had confided a bottle of oxy-hydrogen gas to Mr. Ledbury's care, which, being highly explosive, had gone off so unexpectedly; but fortunately without any ill-effects. The table was, however, thrown into so much confusion that it was thought advisable to conclude the first portion of the lecture, and go on to the dissolving views, the indulgence of the audience being claimed for ten minutes, in order to make the necessary preparations; and then the professor and his assistant retired into the lecturer's room, and the vice-president went to inquire about the health of the Fitzfabrics after the alarm.

"Well, Mr. Ledbury, and *how* are you?" asked Roderick, as they closed the door after them. "I was surprised to see you; you were equally surprised to see me in such a position, I have no doubt: but I am always happy to lend my poor abilities to the advancement of science."

"I certainly did not expect to meet you here," replied Titus.

"Of course not! how should you?—how should you? And the name too,—ha! ha! Professor Wilson! it is at the wish of my family I adopt that *sobriquet*. Allow me the pleasure of taking a glass of wine with you."

There was a bottle of sherry and sixpenny-worth of mixed biscuits on the table, provided by the liberality of the committee, and Mr. Doo poured out for Titus and himself, chiding Mr. Ledbury for not having been to see him, which, as he had never been informed by Roderick where he lived, could not be construed into a direct breach of politeness.

"All right!" said Doo, peeping out at the door. "The porter is hanging up the transparent screen, and this is the apparatus," pointing to two magic-lanterns standing side by side on a box, with a winch in front, that shut up the lens of one whilst it opened the other.

"The contrivance appears very simple," said Mr. Ledbury.

"All grand things are so," answered the professor; "look at my aerial ship. But I am rather in a dilemma, for I have lost the book of reference to the objects. However, we must begin, for the audiencé

are shuffling their feet. Bring out the decanter with you: we can enjoy ourselves as we like behind the screen."

The lights were now gradually lowered, to prevent any new alarm, and when it was quite dark, Mr. Ledbury put in a slide, by Mr. Doo's direction, which turned out to be a portrait of Prince Albert as he would appear walking on his head. But this was immediately withdrawn as soon as the mistake was perceived, and another substituted.

"What is it?" inquired Mr. Doo, in a low voice, of his assistant.

"A Turk who moves his eyes," replied Titus.

"That will do," said Roderick. Speaking loud, "Portrait of Akbar Khan!"

This was received with great applause by all the audience, except a little child in front, who began to cry, and was immediately shaken into silence.

"The next is a seaside place, with ships," said Ledbury, holding the slide between his eyes and the field of the lantern to see what was on it.

"The Harbour of Chusan!" cried Mr. Doo as the Turk dissolved into the new object.

"I think it's meant for Margate," mildly hinted Mr. Ledbury; "yes, there are the wind-mills."

"Hush!" said Roderick, "it will do just as well. Now, what is the next?"

"It is a cottage and a tree. I can't make anything else out of it."

"Birthplace of Robert Bloomfield!" cried Mr. Doo.

"I don't think it is very like it," whispered Ledbury. "I have a view at home which is quite different."

"We can't be far out," returned Mr. Doo, in the same low tone. "All the poets of that class—Sheenstone, Burns, Bloomfield, and Co.—were born in the same kind of houses. I know them well. Little mud hovels, with two windows and a door. Go on."

"I can't see this one very plainly," said Ledbury. "It looks like some fortifications, and a tower."

"Push it in," replied Mr. Doo, finishing a clandestine glass of wine. "Citadel and ramparts of Ghuznee," he continued, aloud.

"That's Windsor Castle!" cried Master Wheeler in front, who lived at Datchet, and was perfectly acquainted with the view, proud of being able to set the lecturer right.

To this piece of gratuitous information succeeded a scuffle in the dark, between the usher and Master Wheeler, together with an extempore discussion upon the subject of academical discipline, as connected with the cane—one party demonstrating it practically, and the other objecting to it theoretically.

Order being restored, a few more scenes were exhibited; and Mr. Doo was just on the point of dissolving Milan Cathedral, which he had designated as the new Houses of Parliament, into a view of the Thames Tunnel, with a gentleman in a bright blue coat walking up the centre, which could not very well be mistaken for anything else,

when a fresh disturbance amongst the audience caused him to pause for an instant in his descriptions. The lights were suddenly turned on, and the librarian of the institution descended from the top bench of the theatre, and whispered something to the vice-president. And then the vice-president's face betrayed much astonishment, and he cast a severe and scrutinising glance first at Mr. Ledbury and then at Mr. Doo, who had pulled up the transparent screen to see what was the matter; after which he begged the patience of the audience for a few seconds, and left the lecture-room. All this was so very mysterious that the curiosity of the company was excited in a most singular manner; and this was not lessened when the vice-president reappeared, ushering two policemen into the theatre—not common rustic constables, but real London alphabetical policemen, with the proper badges round their arms, and shiny tops to their hats. These individuals were at first presumed to have something to do with the entertainments of the evening by the majority of the spectators, who were, however, undeceived when the officers advanced towards Mr. Doo, and one of them said, with much suavity—

“I must trouble you, sir, to come along with us.”

The whole transaction was so rapid that, before Mr. Ledbury and the rest of the audience had recovered from their surprise, the policemen had conducted the thunder-stricken lecturer from the theatre. At the door of the institution a chaise was waiting to receive them, and in two hours from the last dissolving view Mr. Roderick Doo was lodged in one of those secure apartments which the Government, with its usual liberality, provides gratuitously for all who require them; and to which entrance may be obtained at all hours of the night, in the neighbourhood of Bow Street—being very centrally situated, and close to both the large theatres, and other places of public amusement.

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CHAPTER XXXIV.

LEDBURY, JOHNSON, AND SOME FRIENDS PATRONISE THE ILLEGITIMATE
DRAMA.

SOME years back from the epoch of our story, at a period which brings us to the days when Mr. Ledbury went gipsying in a skeleton suit and lie-down collars—when Mavor, Dilworth, and Vyse formed his library, or, at least, the most important part of it, and his only use for a pen was found in the production of sage maxims and high-sounding proper names, copied from the copperplate slips, and ranging from the imposing ARCHIPELAGO of the large hand to the retiring *true content must flow from art and study* of the smaller text—he

possessed, in common with the rest of his class, a diverting book of miscellaneous selections, called a "Speaker." It consisted principally of modern reasonings in praise of virtue and condemnation of vice, interspersed with articles of a higher character, thrown in here and there, like the plums in his acadmic dumplings, to beguile him into swallowing the heavier matter. Amidst these latter papers there was one story particularly amusing, called (if our chronicle quotes aright) "Eyes and no Eyes; or, The Art of Seeing:" the title is hypothetically given, for the book long ago met with a violent end from the hands of Master Walter Ledbury. It treated of a walk in an undefined part of the country taken by a tutor—an important personage in all instructive stories—with a certain Tommy, and his acquaintance, Harry, two young gentlemen, who were represented as dressed in knee-breeches and cocked hats. Well, then, in this walk the tutor—whom Mr. Ledbury always imagined to be a near connection of Mr. Barlow, in "Sandford and Merton," wearing a little round hat, and very like the men in Noah's Ark—indulged in many pleasant observations upon things in general, and, when he returned home questioned his two pupils as to what they had seen. Tommy, whose perceptive faculties appear to have been in high order, related various facts in natural history, philosophy, and the use of the globes, which different circumstances in the walk had given rise to; whilst Harry, like the man who saw nothing at all in the Falls of Niagara but ever so much water tumbling over a rock, did not find his mind particularly expanded by the promenade—in fact, he appears to have regarded the excursion as exceedingly dull and commonplace. This is the abstract meaning of the story, however erroneous we may have been in detail—its end and moral being to prove not only that different people visiting the same locality will each be impressed with different sensations respecting its characteristics, but that, if we have our eyes about us, there is always something worth seeing, even in places of the least promise. This feeling perpetually guided Mr. Ledbury in most of his excursions, balancing their occasional questionability with the comfortable assurance that he was seeing the world, studying mankind, and expanding his mind.

A few days after the opening of the Clumpley Literary and Scientific Institution, Mr. Ledbury left the village for Islington. He stayed a short time to fish, and take long walks, after the manner of most visitors to the country, and was even tempted one day by Mr. Wilmer to mount the old mare—being his first equestrian performance since the ride in the Bois de Boulogne, the morning after their ball in the Quartier Latin. But being recalled to town by his father, who required his services, he left Clumpley, laden with fresh butter, new-laid eggs, and enormous nosegays—Mrs. Wilmer being only sorry that she could not add two fore-quarters of lamb, fed upon the estate—and promising to return again for the race-week. During the few days, however, of his stay, he endeavoured, by his gentlemanly deportment and distinguished manners, to remove the disagreeable notion entertained by the villagers that he was a fellow-culprit with Mr. Roderick Doo, merely at liberty upon bail. And this was not

effected without some trouble, for when country folks once form an idea that any individual is not exactly what he ought to be, it is a task of exceeding difficulty to disabuse them. And so it was in this case; but more especially with the medical men who did not attend Mr. Wilmer's family.

The train returned him and his cargo to the great metropolis as safely as it had taken him down, except in the case of the eggs, which he had been heedless enough to carry in his carpet-bag, thereby causing the vital principal in many of them to escape from the shell before its time. On his arrival, his first care was to visit Jack Johnson, and tell him all the news which he thought would be likely to interest him, and he fortunately found his friend at home, and alone—Mr. Rawkins having been putting his powers of endurance into action at a bad case ever since eleven o'clock the previous night; and Mr. Prodggers being at what he was facetiously pleased to call his anatomical lecture, which, as far as it involved the discussion of various chops at a tavern contiguous to the University, certainly came more closely under that category of medical science than any other, if we accept the physiologies of deglutition and digestion.

"Well, Jack, and how have you been?" inquired Titus, when the first greetings had subsided.

"Oh, much as usual," returned his friend, in a tone that was slightly desponding. "This is not very lively work, after the life I have led, as you may imagine; but I hope it will be all for the best."

"You deserve great credit for your exertions," said Ledbury; "and I am sure Emma thinks the same."

"Does she?" asked Jack, eagerly. "And what does she say?"

"Oh, a great deal—more than I can recollect."

"But you must remember something that she said," continued Jack, wondering how Ledbury could ever forget such precious words, and not taking into consideration that she was only his sister. "Come now, Leddy, try and think."

"Well," responded Titus, with provoking hesitation, "let me see. She has said several times that you would be sure to succeed in whatever you undertook."

"Yes," replied Jack, his countenance somewhat brightening; "go on."

"And Fanny Wilmer asked me one day if you were not a brick—"

"A brick!"

"No, no—you know what I mean—a very nice fellow. I suppose Emma had been slightly committing herself in talking about you to her," added Ledbury, with a smile. "Fanny Wilmer is not such an odd sort of girl as you would suppose, after all."

"Never mind Fanny Wilmer," interrupted Jack; "tell me some more about Emma."

"I can't exactly call to mind what she said; but she talked about you to me a great deal, and told me to be sure to come and see you as soon as I got back to town."

"And did she say, now, that I should succeed in whatever I tried to do?"

"Well, have I not just told you so?" answered Ledbury, smiling.

"Perhaps you would like to hear it all over again?"

"No, no; but it has put me in very good spirits."

"I am very glad of it," returned Titus. "Depend upon it, Jack, everything will turn out for the best. I wish I was the governor: you should never hear a word about that bothering money."

"I should not mind being troubled with a little," observed Johnson. "However, your news, and the sight of your old face again, has somewhat cheered me, for I was beginning to get very gloomy."

And, in proof of the sudden amelioration of his spirits, Jack tucked the skirts of his blue check dressing-gown round his waist, and vaulted over the backs of several chairs, one after another, to give vent to his glee—for, from constantly associating with Mr. Rawkins, he had already imbibed a great love for furniture-gymnastics of all kinds.

At length, when a deficiency of breath put a stop to his muscular exertions, they once more returned to sober conversation, and were discussing the practicability of going somewhere that evening, as it was so long since they had been out together, when Mr. Rawkins returned in great good-humour—his joy at having got over his case to his entire satisfaction being somewhat heightened by a glass of brandy-and-water that he had imbibed at his accustomed tavern on his way home. He was especially polite in his address to Titus also, because old Mr. Ledbury was a person possessing great interest in all parochial affairs, and he had ascertained from Jack Johnson, since their first meeting, that Titus was his son.

"A surgeon's life is not a bed of *Rosæ Fol.*, Mr. Ledbury," said the herculean doctor. "Nobody who could be a chimney-sweep, with good prospects and a genteel connection, would be a medical man. Bob, bring my slippers."

The last sentence was delivered in stentorian accents, in the direction of the kitchen staircase.

"My frame enables me to support the fatigue. That is all pure muscle—feel it," continued Mr. Rawkins, bending his elbow, and calling Mr. Ledbury's attention to a concomitant swelling, half as big as a cocoa-nut, and apparently twice as hard, that rose upon his upper arm. "Tough as a cable," he added, regarding the limb with admiration. "I should think Damien's horses would have been puzzled to stretch that!"

And, with this allusion to the would-have-been assassin of Louis the Fifteenth, and his punishment, which forms a stock anecdote with anatomical professors whenever the question relates to the contractile power of the muscles, Mr. Rawkins allowed the limb to sink once more to repose, and, approaching the door, once more vociferated—

"Bob, where are my slippers?"

A pause succeeded, and then Bob slowly came upstairs, mistrustfully carrying one slipper in his hand, and saying, in great tremor—

"Please, sir, Tiny's pulled the other one all to pieces."

After which he flinched away, in the belief that Mr. Rawkins was about to exhibit the force of muscular power again, with his ears, in view towards a more proper demonstration of the same. But Mr. Rawkins was that day inclined to the "quality of mercy," which, on the authority of Shakespeare, he compared to tincture of aloes, inasmuch as it was not strained, but dropped (through a filter) into the bottle beneath, and was of benefit both to him who gave it (the doctor) and him that took it (the patient). So he merely asked—

"And why did you suffer Tiny to pull the other to pieces, sir?"

"'Cause I was mending the hutch where the guinea-pigs had gnawed their way out."

The answer proving satisfactory, Bob was dismissed, and returned to his occupation, which was repairing one of his shoes with a bit of tin and some small tacks. A few minutes afterwards Mr. Prodgers came in from lecture, accompanied by his friend Tweak, and replied to Mr. Rawkins' inquiry as to whether he would have anything to eat, by affirming that he had just before, to use his own expression, "walked into two chutton mops and a stint of pout."

"I suppose you have come home for good?" asked Mr. Prodgers of the head of the establishment.

"It is all over," replied Mr. Rawkins, "and I shall remain in all the evening. You can go wherever you please."

Whereat Mr. Prodgers immediately suggested that they should go to the "Falcon," and finish the evening there, into which view both Mr. Ledbury and Jack Johnson immediately fell; and as their toilet was never particularly *soignée*, in a few seconds they started off, leaving Mr. Rawkins to the full enjoyment of his muscular power and zoological companions.

Half a century ago—when the sober citizens of London were accustomed to set forth on fine afternoons and take their tea in Shepherd and Shepherdess Fields, "in a style of pleasing rusticity," as they say in the advertisements of the Margate *Shallows*—half a century ago, as they listened to the bells of old St. Mary's Church in "merry Islington" ringing over the green meadows and wooded lanes which surrounded that agreeable village, they little dreamt in how comparatively short a space of time population would sit in triumph over the destruction of their favourite localities, and the songs of the birds be exchanged for the vocal and instrumental efforts of real musicians. Yet so has it come to pass: the huge metropolis, which stretches out its arms in all directions, like some vast polypus of bricks and mortar, each limb becoming the centre of a new organisation, has already overrun the pastures just alluded to; and Rossini and refreshment tickets, Auber and alcohol, Bellini and bottled beer, have supplanted the minstrelsy of nature, whilst clouds of smoke from cheap cheroots form an appropriate atmosphere.

We are not quite certain whether the number of musical taverns which, within the last few years, have formed a prominent feature in the amusements of the inferior metropolitan classes, originated in

minor attempts to imitate the concerts of Vauxhall or the dramatic *cafés* of the Continent, in which *vaudevilles* are played whilst the company are taking their refreshment. We may instance the *Café du Spectacle*, on the Boulevard des Bonnes Nouvelles, at Paris, as the highest specimen of this kind of entertainment, and the *Café des Aveugles*, in the cellars of the Palais Royal, as the lowest—approaching nearer in its style and company to the public-house concerts of London. What their effect is upon the community in a moral or musical point of view we leave to be determined by graver economists than ourselves; but we may be allowed to add, that in these days, when “the decline of the drama” is so much talked about, their greatest mischief is possibly in the direct injury which they do to the regular theatres, wherein the audiences of these tavern-concerts might perchance seek a more legitimate amusement if the musical assemblies were not in existence. But, as it is, they prefer the free and easy manner in which the whole affair is conducted; nor do we think this state of things can be changed until the harmonie saloons be more restricted in their style of entertainments, or pipes and gin-and-water be allowed in the pit and galleries of the patent theatres.

As Mr. Prodgers had suggested the diversion of the evening, it was left to his knowledge of the localities to conduct his friends to the “Falcon”; and during their progress he beguiled the journey by an infinity of verbal encounters with such little boys as came in his way, whose sallies in return caused much amusement to the party, for no class is so ready at impertinent replies as the little boys. We incline especially to those miniature men of nine years old who never appear to have known what a jacket was, but prefer walking abroad in great thoroughfares with their shirt-sleeves tucked up, who wear their caps very forward on their closely-cropped heads, and who constantly indulge in *al fresco* cavatinas, which no popular reproof or remonstrance can interrupt, except the chance of pulling that curiously useless machine, the parish engine, to some rumoured fire, or going beyond Confucius, and composing a tune of one note upon the directing-pipe thereof.

Perhaps they did not get on so well with Mr. Prodgers in their small annoyances as with other less experienced people, for he had studied their economy with some care, and usually took the replies which he expected they would make out of their mouths, by saying them first.

“Is it much farther?” asked Mr. Tweak, as they turned from some hitherto unknown back streets into the City Road.

“Not much,” responded Prodgers; “are you tired?”

“No,” returned Mr. Tweak, “not at all, only, if I wished to come again by myself, I do not think that I should recollect the way.”

“That is very possible,” said Jack. “Your best plan will generally be to lose yourself in the far-west of Hoxton, and then wander about until you come by accident upon the object of your travels.”

In about twenty minutes from their leaving the abode of Rawkins the party arrived at the portico of the “Falcon,” and upon payment

of a shilling each they were permitted to enter, as well as presented with a check entitling them to sixpennyworth of refreshment. Traversing the gardens, which appeared to produce statues and tea-tables in high perfection, with a few enclosed beds for the cultivation of lamp-posts, they passed a species of bar, and entered the very large room which formed the theatre. As soon as their eyes got accustomed to the clouds of tobacco-smoke, they perceived a capacious *salle*, with a regular stage at one end of it; boxes upstairs going round the sides, and the area of the floor fitted up with seats, bearing no very inapt resemblance to pews, except that the ledges in front were intended for tumblers of grog instead of books.

Although this establishment was not a great distance from Mr. Ledbury's boyhood's home, yet he had never been there before; and not expecting to see such a large place, was somewhat overcome upon entering. But as soon as he had recovered from this first surprise, he saluted the company, which was his habit at public places ever since he had been on the Continent, and then looking doubly benignant at the young lady in pink muslin, who was singing a song from the same piece of music that had served for the whole of the *artistes*, was inducted into a seat by Jack Johnson, who appeared perfectly conversant with the usages of the place, as indeed he was wherever he went. Mr. Prodgers and his friend took their places at their side, and then they ordered some "refreshment," which was a polite term for grog, discovering at the same time that the sum to which they were entitled was ingeniously contrived so as to be just insufficient to procure anything above bottled stout—draught beer being far too plebeian a beverage for the concert. And then, delivering themselves up entirely to the *abandon* of the meeting, Johnson, Prodgers, and Tweak bought some pasty and shrimps—the former comestible being carried round by an *attaché* to the concern, who balanced his tray in a perilous manner upon one hand; and the latter *crustacea* being vended by a privileged dealer, who was allowed the admission.

Mr. Ledbury, whose ideas were naturally mildly refined, was some little time before he could be brought to join his companions at the banquet; but at length, by a great mental effort, he complied with their requests that, when he visited an ancient Italian city, he should assume a deportment in common with those who were already domiciled there. And until he made the essay he never could have imagined that shrimps and "Somnambula" would go so well together, unheeding the retiring request of the young lady, who, in the character of Amina, had walked the plank, and kicked down the pan-tiles, in her night-gown, that the company generally would refrain from mingling one human feeling with other more blissful rhapsodies.

The second piece was evidently the great attraction. It was called "The Blazing Demon of the Haunted Gorge," and contained "combats of six," "incidental ballets," and "terrific dénouements," besides incidents so very mysterious that they were in some places almost incomprehensible. However, Mr. Ledbury, who watched the progress of the piece with some degree of interest, so much so that at times he quite forgot his shrimps, discovered that there was a persecuted princess

in the custody of a dreadful knight in a terrible breastplate, who looked as if he had not only despoiled the adjacent country, but had even robbed all the bed-posts of their brass roundabouts to make his armour. But the princess had another lover, in whom Jack Johnson recognised the gentleman who had made some vocal allusions to his friend and pitcher in the previous concert; and this was the favoured sweetheart, as, by established rule, all tenors ought to be. The "demon," who was a species of impish petrel, always hovering about when mischief was afloat, was dressed in a tight red costume, looking as Zamiel might be supposed to appear when about to bathe; and, somehow or other, he lured the princess into a cavern where six other imps had taken up their quarters, being the peasants of the first act, in black gaberdines, with double red-worsted comforters cut in half, and pulled over their heads to look horrible; and pitchforks, tipped with tow and spirits of wine, in their hands. And when two of them sat down in front of the stage, Mr. Prodgers, who was near the orchestra, begged the favour of a light for his cigar from the demon's trident, which led to some warm words, as, of course, coming from a demon they ought to be; in which the imp implied his disbelief in any opinion tending to prove that Mr. Prodgers was a gentleman; and Mr. Prodgers in return, begged to know, from the demon's own mouth, what would be the probable expense of his nose without the green tinsel; and in all likelihood this argument would have ended in a combat of two, not expressed in the bills of the day, had not the business of the piece called the demon to a remote corner of the stage.

This end of the dispute was not altogether unpleasant to Mr. Ledbury, as he entertained a great dislike of all disturbances; and, moreover, perceiving by the bills that innocence was to be triumphant, was curious to see in what manner this consummation would be represented. It commenced by the appearance of four young ladies, with surpassingly-alabaster complexions, and clear muslin dresses, of scanty length, but *bien bouffée*, so that they somewhat resembled plaster busts put upon mushrooms. Having gone through various slow manœuvres, they danced a *pas* indicative of joy, looking fondly at the area of tobacco-smoke before them; for, as to seeing anything of their audience beyond the three or four front rows, it was all imagination and gas light. Then some red fire was let off behind the wings, and in the midst of the glare the principal *danseuse* bounded on, amidst the applause of those fortunate spectators who could discern her, and who clapped their unglued hands as vigorously as the kidded palms at the opera would have done—perhaps more so—to reward the aerial gyrations of Fanny Ellsler or Cerito.

"I say, Jack!" cried Mr. Ledbury, with unusual animation, to his friend, whose mind during the last half-hour had been more occupied by his own reflections than the progress of the drama; "look at the face of the girl who is dancing. It is our old patient at the show."

Johnson started from his reverie, during which he had been vacantly gazing at the floating wreaths of smoke that rose from his cigar to dissolve into the general haze which filled the saloon, and

turned his eyes to the stage. The dancer at the same moment, as if impelled by some magnetic attraction, looked towards him, and as she met his gaze, gave a start of surprise, which was perceptible to all the party.

"One of us has made a conquest," observed Mr. Prodgers, arranging his stock, and endeavouring to twist a most rebellious tuft of hair on the left side of his head into a curl; after which he put his hat at a slight inclination to the axis of his ears, and displayed one glove. "Tweak, do you think I look the thing?"

"Immense!" replied his companion, graciously bowing to the dancer, previous to his exhibiting in pantomime that he was drinking her health—a compliment, however, which she did not appear to set a just value upon.

"You are the man, Mr. Ledbury!" observed Mr. Prodgers to their associate, who was following every *posé* of the ballet-girl with a smile of almost unearthly serenity; "she sees what a wild young gallant you are."

"Who? what? I? oh! nonsense!" replied Mr. Ledbury, blushing very much, and then blowing his nose to turn it off. "She is an old acquaintance of Johnson's and mine, to be sure."

"Speak for yourself, Leddy," said Jack, "and do not make me answerable for all your gallantries. We know what a rake you have been."

"Now, Jack, really," replied Mr. Ledbury, much confused, and not knowing precisely how to finish his sentence. But to his relief the curtain fell at this moment upon the conclusion of the performances, shutting out the triumph of innocence from the edified spectators, and veiling the *coryphées* from vulgar sight, whilst they fell into a *tableau*, expressive of fascination as connected with the difficulty of standing upon one leg. The principal dancer, however, in spite of the applause, and a small fasciculus of wall-flowers hurled at her by a young "gent" upstairs, kept her eye fixed upon Johnson until the drop fell and terminated the temporary existence of the unfortunate criminals who had been engaged up to that time in murdering the drama.

Our *quartette* fell into the stream of people who were now leaving the saloon upon the close of the entertainment, and passed onwards to the outer entrance. But as they crossed the garden a female, enveloped in a large common cloak, the hood of which was drawn over her head, emerged from a small door at the side of the principal building, and approaching Johnson, civilly requested permission to speak to him for an instant. There was so much anxiety in her manner that Johnson told the others to proceed and wait for him outside, in spite of the badinage which such a circumstance might be supposed to give rise to; and then stepped on one side with the person who had accosted him, a little apart from the crowd that was still pouring from the concert-room.

"I hope, sir, you will pardon the liberty I am taking," said the female, who was the first to speak. "I believe I am addressing Mr. Johnson?"

"That is my name, certainly," replied Jack; what do you wish to say to me?"

"It is about—Edward Morris," returned the other, with some hesitation; "you know now, perhaps, who I am."

And partly throwing open the cloak, which had been apparently put on in haste to catch Johnson as he left the saloon, she exhibited her ballet-dress underneath.

"Proceed," said Johnson, earnestly, as he recognised the girl with whom the reader has before become acquainted: what makes you wish to see me?"

"It is at his request," rejoined the other, "that I have taken this liberty; for it is long since he has heard of you, although he has been very anxious to do so. I went to your old lodgings, but they told me that you had left there some time."

"But how did you come to recognise me?" asked Johnson. "I do not think that I should have known you again if you had not been pointed out to me."

"I was not likely to forget you after your attention to one so fallen as myself; I have met with so little kindness," replied the girl, in a faltering tone, as a tear stole down her cheek, leaving the track of its progress in the common rouge which was still upon her face. "But I have seen you often since then: at evening—in the surgery. I asked the boy your name, and then I found out that you were the same person Morris so wished to see."

"But why did you not come in to speak to me yourself, my good girl?" asked Johnson.

"I did not dare. I thought you would be angry at my even appearing to know you. And Morris would not trust to a letter."

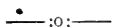
"And what does he want?" inquired Johnson, inwardly suspecting the real cause of his cousin's anxiety to meet him again.

"I cannot say precisely; but I know it is something of importance. May I tell him that you will come?"

"You may," returned Johnson, after a minute's pause. And pencilling down the address which the girl gave him, he then bade her good-night, and hastily rejoined his friends, who were awaiting his arrival at the gates with much expectancy. But neither jokes nor persuasions could induce him to relate what had passed during the short interview; indeed, he appeared so uncomfortable when they pressed him too closely to tell them that they gave up the attempt, and fell into the ordinary manner of conversation. But Jack was too thoughtful to add much to their hilarity; and, on arriving at the end of the street leading to his present abode, he wished them good-night, and returned to Rawkins'—a proceeding which much increased their curiosity.

Finding his friend thus disposed, Mr. Ledbury was about to go home also; but as neither of the others felt at all homeward bound, he was prevailed upon to keep with them, and they finished the evening together. It has never been precisely handed down in what manner this was done, except that their orgies terminated the next morning, at daybreak, in Covent Garden, by their breaking their fast.

together at an early house, after Mr. Ledbury had insisted upon making the tour of the market and the piazzas in a basket, balanced upon the head of one of the stoutest porters; from which position he assured a crowd of market people that at the next election he should be found at his post on the hustings in front of the church, pledged to support the agricultural interests, especially in relation to small salad and turfs for larks.



CHAPTER XXXV.

MRS. DE ROBINSON HOLDS A "CONVERSAZIONE" OF TALENTED PEOPLE.

THE season was now at its height, and the London world, awakened from its hybernal torpor, was all life and excitement. The leading thoroughfares of the West End presented a continuous whirl of dust and carriages; the shops unfolded all their most attractive treasures; and concerts followed one another so rapidly, that it became perfectly marvellous to consider where the singers found sufficient breath to pour out so many consecutive notes, and where the audiences discovered so many half-guineas to procure admission. Foreign gentlemen, of fearful aspect and fantastic apparel, re-appeared upon the pavements of Regent Street and Piccadilly, after a long sojourn in the occult second floors of remote neighbourhoods, which they now strenuously eschewed, like the tinselled dragon-flies springing from the creeping things at the bottom of the pool, and then no longer able to exist in the element from which they sprang; and the summer theatres burst out into a blaze of talent and strength to attract their supporters, from the refined *habitués* of the Italian Opera to the would-be-so's of the French plays, who went because they thought it compulsory to attend, and proved themselves better actors than those on the stage, in assuming an expression of knowing all about what was going on, and taking their cues for laughter from the general mass.

Nor did the turmoil cease at night; for then camellias, from eighteenpence upwards, left the cool arcades of the flower-marts for the heated drawing-rooms of goodness-knows-where, clinging to perfumed tresses, or sometimes falling down upon ivory shoulders, and kissing damask cheeks with their petals in a manner ravishing to behold, which almost tempted youths of Byronic temperament to regret they were not camellias. And then, also, drawing-room windows were lighted up, and blinds became transparent, and shadowy forms flitted backwards and forwards upon their surface, plainly visible to common people in the street by the liberality of the owners of the houses, who did not shut their shutters in order that

watchful neighbours might observe that they also had connections of their own. Quadrille bands, too, poured forth indistinct sounds, in which the bass predominated, tantalizing the ears of those who had not received invitations; and especially the young gentleman opposite, who knew a certain young lady was to be there, and so lay awake half the night listening to the revelry, and tracing all the progress of the party by the echoes of the music that reached his bedroom—the orderly *ante-cænal* quadrilles; the temporary pause during supper; and the twenty minutes' waltz afterwards, to tire all the guests into thinking about getting home, just as the aforesaid young gentleman could make out the position of his plaster-cast of Taglioni, and the situation of his wash-stand in the dim grey of morning. And then the human glowworms, in woollen shoes, whose lanterns had hovered about the steps and scrapers of the house of festival since nine o'clock the previous evening, called their last cab, received their last gratuity, stated their belief for the last time that they were blessed, boxed up their last guests, and clumped off to breakfast at the nearest perambulating coffee-stand that the corner of some street afforded.

It was at this pleasant season of the year, so humanely established to preserve intellectual and educated minds from becoming a prey to the *ennui* which a contemplation of spring sunshine and foliage in the country, with its common-place hedgrows and vulgar primroses must necessarily induce—that Mrs. de Robinson, of Eaton Place, sent out cards with initials stamped thereon, enclosed in envelopes of costly nature, and secured by "*pains à cacheter*," of coloured isinglass, bearing impress "LUNDI," "MARDI," or "MERCREDI," as the case might be, with embossed views of the Tuileries and Hôtel des Invalides, requesting that certain friends would gratify her with their company on a particular evening, about six weeks ahead in the columns of the almanack from the date thereof. The Grimleys received an invitation, and so did the Ledburys—by post, of course; for the generality of the inhabitants of Eaton Place regard Islington as a remote district, to which no railroad has as yet been contemplated, but which is, for aught they know, celebrated for sea-bathing and volcanoes.

It was not long before Mrs. Huddle, who knew everything, discovered that the anticipated *réunion* was to be musical and literary, rather than Terpsichorean, and that all sorts of great people in both these lines were expected, which secret she immediately imparted to Miss Grimley, during one of that young lady's customary visits for the interchange of news with the old lady, in which a highly-coloured account had been given of the dissipated manner in which they had found "that Mr. Johnson" spending his time; and what a sad thing it would be for poor Miss Ledbury if their acquaintance should terminate, after all, in a match—how very sorry she should be. And so we think Miss Grimley would have been—very sorry indeed. No persuasions could induce either old Mr. Ledbury or Mr. Grimley to say they would go, when they perfectly understood the nature of the entertainment; so the Grimleys agreed to share the expense of the

Hoxton fly with their neighbours (since, Emma being in the country, only Titus and his mother were going), for private bickerings in Islington always yield to mutual interest. They may possibly do the same in other places; but of this we are not certain.

The house belonging to the De Robinsons in Eaton Place was a perfect marvel of collected rarities, and looked somewhat like a curiosity shop from the regions of Soho, that had made its fortune and retired to the West End in affluent circumstances. People of average nerves were somewhat perplexed, upon first calling, as to how they could approach Mrs. De Robinson, after having been shown into the drawing-room, without committing serious damage in threading the various labyrinths of wonderful and costly things which had been constructed with so much cunning and ingenuity about the apartment; and, if the mistress of the house did not happen to be in the room, they usually remained exactly where they were, without moving, and in extreme trepidation until she came. But when they had been piloted to a seat upon whose trustworthiness they could rely, in contra-distinction to the light, creaky, anatomical preparations of chairs disposed about the apartment, which might have been taken for doll's-house furniture that had outgrown its strength, they were enabled to summon up sufficient courage to look around them. The prevailing species of ornament about the room was the composite disorder, relieved in some of the furniture by the Pimlico-Gothic, or modern florid, especially as regarded the harp, and piano, which presented combinations of the Louis Quatorze and early Christian styles. There were several very large looking-glasses, with marble slabs before them, covered with china shepherds, and books cut out of Pompey's pillar and the rock of Gibraltar, as well as two or three extraordinary clocks in Dresden alabaster and ormolu cases, which would have been very useful in noting the mean time in various parts of the room, only, in common with all their species, they never went longer than ten minutes after they had been wound up. Then there were screens, and jars, and ottomans, and doves sitting round card-baskets, together with fragile models of leaning towers at Pisa, and bronze letter-weights of every form and device; besides tall cut bottles for scent, in which there never was any, and small teacups and saucers, pastile burners, pearl paper-cutters, and taper candlesticks; so that the only problem remaining to be solved was where Mrs. De Robinson could possibly put anything else that she might take a fancy to.

The Grimleys and Ledburys did not arrive at the house until rather late upon the important evening in question; and when at last they got there, it was some time before they could make any way beyond the landing outside the door. At length they just contrived to get their heads inside the room, and there Mr. Ledbury immediately recognised the Bernards, whom he had dined with at the boarding-house on the Boulevard des Italiens, and who replied very graciously to his salute. Fighting his way to the corner of the apartment, every inch of ground being contested by the guests already assembled with the most unflinching valour, he contrived to find a spare six inches of

rout-seat for his mother, and then wedged himself back again, until he stood side by side with young Bernard, from whom he derived a great deal of information about the company.

"This is something like a crowd, Mr. Ledbury," observed that gentleman, as he contrived, after many attempts, to get his handkerchief up to his face. "Phew!—how long have you been here?"

"I had but just arrived, when I saw you," replied Titus.

"You are in luck, then," returned the other. "Our people came two hours ago, and I have never moved from this place since I entered the room. I would if I could, but I can't."

And as he uttered these words Mr. John Bernard cast a wistful glance towards a very pretty girl at the end of the room; but the passage of the Khyber Pass would have been nothing to the attempt to get near her had he tried.

"Do you know many of the lions here to-night?" he continued.

"None," said Mr. Ledbury. "I shall be very thankful to you if you will point them out."

"Wait till all this is over, and then I will. Oh dear! I wish they would blow half the candles out, and open the windows."

A foreign gentleman, who wanted his hair cut very badly, with a name that nobody had, up to the present time, been able to pronounce, now took his seat at the piano, Mrs. De Robinson having prevailed upon him to oblige the company with a performance thereon. And this he did with a vengeance—it was only a wonder how the piano survived such a succession of violent assaults as were continued upon it for about twenty minutes. First, the foreign gentleman arranged his hair to his satisfaction, turned up his cuffs and wristbands, and galloped his fingers at random over the keys, by way of symphony; whilst those immediately round the piano, compelled by their position to take an interest in the display, gave forth various intonations of the word "*ish-h-h!*" to command silence. When this was procured, the *artiste* commenced his prelude, which might be likened to a continuous discharge of musical squibs, the occasional attack of the little finger of the left hand upon the extreme bass notes producing the bangs; and then there was that vague sort of instrumentation which a lively kitten might be expected to produce when shut up in the front part of an old-fashioned cabinet piano, by running over the keys. At last all this came down to the popular air of "*Auld Lang Syne*," which was played throughout as people had been accustomed to hear it, previously to introducing the variations thereon. But these contained the grandest part of the foreign gentleman's performance, and were founded upon the principle of making the tune as unlike itself as could possibly be done. And there was a great deal of wily pleasantry in these variations, the leading joke appearing to be that of putting the original air to great personal inconvenience. First of all, the tune seemed stretched out to twice its length, while a quantity of small notes buzzed all about it, like tiresome flies; and then you thought you were going to hear it again, only you did not, but something quite different, through which, however, the tune kept starting up at certain intervals, to be immediately knocked on the head by

some powerful chord for its audacity, until it was finally settled, and appeared no more until the finale. It took a great deal of beating, though for all that, to get rid of it even for a time; and when, at last, you heard it in conclusion, it seemed to have become quite reckless from its captivity, and darted wildly about to all parts of the piano at once, with such a headstrong audacity that you no longer wondered at the airs it had given itself in a previous part of the performance. Nor was the foreign gentleman less excited; for being evidently under the influence of some invisible galvanic battery, he breathed hard and fast, and shrugged his shoulders, and twitched his face and elbows to such a degree that nobody would have been at all surprised to have seen sparks fly off from him in all directions towards the nearest conductors—the most proximate being the caoutchouc ear cornet upon which a deaf old lady, in a rather terrific turban, was performing a solo near the pianist.

Great was the applause when he concluded by giving a final spring at all the keys together, and precipitately rushing from the instrument, as if he stood in extreme dread of the consequences likely to result from so savage and unprovoked an attack. But everybody appeared extensively delighted—whether at the wonderful performance, or because it was over, did not seem so clearly defined; although there was no doubt that, somehow or other, these firework harmonies created a sensation.

When this was over, the buzz of conversation commenced again in full force, being chiefly confined to the *literari* who were present—whilst the average everyday company sat and listened to them with great veneration, not unmixed with fear “that they should be shown up”; which seems to be a prevalent superstition amongst the multitude whenever authors are present, no matter to what class of literature they belong, or however meagre may be the subjects for a sketch.

Mrs. De Robinson had contrived to bring together a great many whose names and writings were familiar to the public; and Mr. Ledbury, after these lions had been pointed out to him, found great interest in listening to their remarks. He was pleased to see, in common with all professions, how very warm-hearted was their attachment towards each other—how sorry they were to find that poor B—’s comedy was not a hit, and how happy they appeared to learn that J—’s new work was going well. It is true these expressions of good feeling were generally accompanied by some qualifying remark; but that, of course, went for nothing. With all this, however, Mr. Ledbury was somewhat astonished to find what a little they thought of all those authors with whose names he was best acquainted—in fact, how universal popularity was always in an inverse ratio to ability—how totally distinct was talent from the power of generally pleasing. And when they spoke of another author, whose works had been so wonderfully relished—who had even made those read who never read before—whose characters were regarded as household and familiar friends, not only in perceptive London, but in many quiet and sequestered nooks and corners of the country, and even in distant

lands*—who had alike provoked tears and laughter round so many firesides, and struck so many chords in unison with the hearts of millions, by his daguerreotypical fidelity in sketching everyday scenes and people—when Mr. Ledbury heard all this, and heard them say, moreover, that the writer in question had no great mind, no sympathies, no acute knowledge of human nature, he began to consider himself fortunate in being thrown into the society of such wonderfully clever men, and having his judgment corrected by their superior intellectuality. And this led several of them to talk about the high style of literature—that kind which should last long after the author himself had departed—how preferable that was to the empty, ephemeral praise of the hour. This, of course, Mr. Ledbury thought perfectly unquestionable, as indeed it was; and at the same time, as he remarked how very little these authors who were talking about this high style partook of passing popularity, or appeared to be generally read, he thought it but just that they should have a hope of posthumous remuneration to make up for the inattention.

The musical entertainments proceeded to the great admiration of the audience—the great object of the evening being a MS. ballad, the words by Miss De Robinson, and the music by an eminent professor then present, which several publishers of the first standing had pronounced as too good to be ever widely circulated. The words were very pretty, not to say affecting, and the song itself was called “I’ll meet you in the willow glen,” in reply to another celebrated ballad by a popular composer. The music was very cleverly arranged, and went to prove, as is frequently the case, what anticipatory plagiarists a great many of the previous composers had been. But everybody was in ecstasies when it came to an end, and it was unanimously encored.

“What do you think of that, Mr. Ledbury?” asked Mr. Bernard.

“A very pleasing composition,” replied Titus, scarcely knowing what he was expected to say.

But this was all right, for Miss De Robinson had asked Mr. John Bernard’s opinion of the words before anybody else’s, having ascertained that he not only, twice in his lifetime, got a prize of six pocket-books for answering the riddles in poetry, but had also, after great labour and corrections, produced an “*impromptu*” upon seeing something or another, which ultimately found its way into a leading fashion-book.

“She has a very nice idea of poetry, that girl,” continued Mr. Bernard, patronizingly. “Her song, ‘The First Rose of Summer,’ and ‘The Blind Troubadour’s Address to his Boots,’ are two of the prettiest things you ever heard.”

“Are they published?” asked Titus.

* We were amused in 1838 at seeing a pocket-handkerchief exposed for sale at one of the stalls surrounding Milan Cathedral imprinted with the principal characters from this author’s first work. And in 1840 we found that an Italian translator had placarded the name of the poor parish orphan of England against the walls of the Ducal Palace of Venice.

"Oh, no,—no," answered Mr. Bernard; "privately circulated. It does not do, you know, to let these things get too common;—then the interest attached to them is gone. Have you been on the river yet?"

Mr. Ledbury replied in the negative.

"I think I recollect your saying at Paris," resumed Mr. Bernard, "that you were not much on the water, except in the iron steamboats, and that you knew none of the Leander men. By the way, how is that Mr. Johnson who was with you?"

"He is perfectly well," answered Titus. "I saw him a few days ago.

"He was rather a loose fish, I believe," said the other, who had not quite forgotten the trick with the hot wine. "At least," he continued, not meeting with any expression of acquiescence with his remark from Ledbury—"at least, I believe that is the opinion of the Grimleys."

"He is my most intimate friend," said Mr. Ledbury, gravely, "and one in whom I have the greatest confidence."

Mr. John Bernard saw he was upon the wrong tack, and immediately changed the conversation by reverting to the heated state of the rooms, and the probability of procuring any refreshment, for which the present seemed an eligible opportunity, since some musicians near the piano were evidently getting ready for action, as respected a conflict with the difficulties in a quartette of many pages. With no small pains they gained the door; and then, with apologies for disturbing a great many people who were sitting upon the stairs, they made their way to a small room devoted to the distribution of lemonade and negus, where a few of the guests had apparently remained all the evening, not having sufficient muscular energy or moral courage to proceed farther.

"I wish I could have got near my mother," said Titus. "I think she would have liked some refreshment."

"So would mine, no doubt," added his companion; "but the thing is an impossibility—the triumph of social discomfort over filial affection. By the way, those *conversazioni* are cheap things to give, it strikes me, and make a great show at a little cost. What with those who don't choose to take anything, and those who can't get at it if they would, the consumption must be inconsiderable. A glass of wine?"

"With pleasure," resumed Ledbury, with much affability, for which he was always celebrated. And having by this time forgotten Mr. Bernard's remark about Jack Johnson, he placed himself by his side upon a rout-stool, and they got into very pleasant conversation. For, taking him altogether, Mr. Bernard was not the disagreeable person he had appeared at the boarding-house, where he had evidently been trying to show off before strangers.

"Ha! Pizzicato, how d'ye do?" cried that gentleman to a good-tempered-looking foreigner, who entered the room in a very advanced stage of animal caloric.

"Ver well, sank you," was the reply. "Piff! how it makes hot upstairs!"

"Mon Dieu ; oui. Il fait bien chand," replied Mr. Bernard, who, because his acquaintance was an Italian, occasionally thought it proper and well-bred to speak to him in French, to show that he had been abroad. Let me introduce you to my friend. Mr. Ledbury—Signor Pizzicato, of her Majesty's Theatre."

"Ver happy to know you, M. Lebri," replied the signor, with a bow.

"I met Mr. Ledbury in Paris last year," observed Mr. Bernard.

"Ah! ah!" said the signor. "What you sink of Paris, M. Lebri?"

"Well, I like it amazingly for some things," replied Titus; "but I should prefer London to live in, upon the whole."

"Yess—Yess!" returned the other. "Ad ogni uccello suo nido è bello!"

"Perhaps so," observed Ledbury with an off-hand tone, which even Jack Johnson would have been astonished at, letting alone Mr. John Bernard, who, not understanding Italian, might just as well have listened to any observation made in the prevalent dialect of the rural Chinese districts. But Mr. Ledbury had lately purchased a "Treasury of Knowledge," and to that remarkable compilation he owed his erudition in foreign proverbs, in which species of maxims both introduction and margin abound, to the great delight of the ingenious reader when he is not compelled to turn the book in various directions before he can read them.

As Mr. Ledbury's acquaintance with professionals had hitherto been exceedingly limited, in consequence of such society not being perfectly comprehended by the mildly sedate families of Islington, he felt at first no small degree of awe at being in the presence of a real Italian singer attached to the Opera, and was exceedingly courteous and deferential, even being somewhat astonished at Mr. Bernard's perfect ease in addressing the signor. But when Titus had mustered up courage enough sufficient to ask him to take wine, he found he was not such a fearful person after all, but very affable and good-tempered, and quite different in his nature to the terrible high-priest that Mr. Ledbury had seen him enact some little time back, with the attributes of which character he could not help still investing him; in the same manner as many people imagine comic actors off the stage to be perpetually pouring forth sallies of the brightest humour and jocularity, similar to those with which they convulse the house when on the boards. In these cases, a certain appendage to the company, ranking somewhere amongst the carpenters and door-keepers, and called an author, is seldom thought about.

As none of the party felt the least inclination to force their way into the hot and crowded rooms upstairs, despite the attraction of the musical, graphic, and literary guests there assembled, they remained for some time chatting together; and Mr. Ledbury, charmed to find himself associating with so renowned an individual as Signor Pizzicato, took advantage of the opportunity to ask him many questions connected with the mysteries of the *coulisses*, and the private life of the performers; what the *prima donna* looked like off the stage; and whether

the baritone was a nice fellow ; and sundry small points in the domestic economy of each. And so well did they get on together, that upon his avowing his wonder at what the behind-the-scenes of the Opera was like, the signor promised to introduce him into that spell-bound region on the ensuing evening, if he would like to come. It is almost needless to add that Titus exhibited that species of mental gymnastics known as jumping at an offer ; and having arranged a rendezvous for the next afternoon, proceeded upstairs to look after Mrs. Ledbury.

As some of the company had by this time taken their leaves, it was not so difficult to get near anybody with whom conversation might be desirable, and accordingly Mr. Ledbury took his seat by the side of his mother, and remained there until their party left, expressing their unbounded gratitude to the De Robinson family for the great treat they had experienced. And when they had departed, the De Robinsons generally, having congratulated themselves considerably upon the number of lions they had wedged together—which triumph is supposed to be the chief end of these *réunions*—thanked goodness that it was all over, thought the people would never have gone, agreed the song went off remarkably well, and then retired respectively to their bedrooms.

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CHAPTER XXXVI.

MR. LEDBURY MEETS AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE OPERA.

To be admitted into the most exclusive *penetralia* of Her Majesty's Theatre—to be enabled, possibly, to stand by the side of the goddess of the ballet for the time being, and perhaps to be brushed by the aerial gauze of her tissue robes, as she bounded on or off the stage, amidst the plaudits of entranced hundreds—to hear the *prima donna* speak in her natural voice—probably to be introduced to the tenor—and, above all, to be surrounded by sounds of the most delicious music, wreaths of ever-blooming flowers, and twinkling groups of fairies, sylphs, and naiads, was to Mr. Ledbury an event which, in his wildest dreams of epicurean enjoyment, he had never contemplated ; and consequently his brain, all night long, indulged in one long-continued *pirouette* ; and in his visions he pictured himself floating on clouds amidst attendant peris, with a coronal of roses round his head, whilst on every side of him, shadowy forms, with undeniable legs, diaphonous undulating tunics, and circling arms of faultless symmetry, were floating like notes in the sunbeams. Now he chased the fairest of the attendant hours through groves of rare exotics—now she approached

to present him with a guerdon of his devotion—and now a rap at the door, which betokened the arrival of a jug of warm water, with the information that it was half-past eight, broke his slumbers, and recalled him to the dull realities of life.

The day passed slowly away, and at the appointed hour Mr. Ledbury, after bestowing singular attention upon his toilet, called at Signor Pizzicato's lodgings in the Quadrant, and was very courteously received by that gentleman, who was finishing a repast from something very foreign, with the M.S. score of a new part propped up against a claret-bottle in front of him, the which he was occasionally humming during the intervals of deglutition. Perceiving that his guest had arrived, he brought the meal hastily to a conclusion, and then they started off together; Mr. Ledbury feeling no small degree of self-satisfaction at walking arm-in-arm down Regent Street with so distinguished a character, and looking at all the passengers, shopkeepers, and people in carriages, as much as to say "Ah! you little think I am going behind the scenes at the opera." He even fancied everybody appeared cheerless who was coming in the opposite direction.

As he approached the house he felt slightly nervous; but this was dispelled when he entered the stage-door, and politely made his obeisance to all the policemen and persons attached to the theatre there assembled. They went across a room, at which a man was sitting at a desk to check all those who entered, and then passing a small wicket, guarded by an official, entered a long arched passage, with gas-lights at certain intervals. Threading a number of intricate labyrinths, which Mr. Ledbury conceived to be thus complicated in order that any one, having obtained surreptitious entrance at the gate, might here lose his way and die of famine, but with the windings of which the signor appeared to be perfectly familiar, they at length emerged suddenly, and stood in the *coulisses* of the stage. Here the signor was obliged to quit his companion, that he might go and dress, having first conducted Mr. Ledbury across the theatre to the prompt side, where he told him he should look out for him again, and Titus immediately retreated between some scenes, where he was out of everybody's way, and could get a glimpse of the stage between the wings now and then.

Possibly Mr. Ledbury's first sensations were those of extreme disappointment, which were not diminished upon looking at the rough, dirty appearance of everything around him. Nor, indeed, is any situation more uncomfortable than that of strangers admitted behind the scenes of any theatre, whatever visions they may have formed of that sanctum. Knowing nobody, and gazed at by everybody; violently driven into all sorts of corners and extremities by the scene-shifters and carpenters: perfectly unable to form an idea of what is going on before the audience, except at the first entrance, from which they are frightened off in most cases by a terrific notice in the vicinity of the prompter's box—no more tempted to enter the green-room than to walk across the stage at the foot-lights, or, if they do, to be immediately sent back again by the cold stare of the inmates; comprehending, if they have any powers of perception, that

they are literally in another world, with usages, customs, and even language of its own, a knowledge of which can only be gained by experience, they most probably pass about as unpleasant a time as any one could well imagine. And Mr. Ledbury partook somewhat of these feelings, until a chorus left the stage at the side where he was placed; when, having recognised amongst them a Venetian nobleman, who used to sing of the monks of old—how they laughed ha! ha!—at a tavern he was in the habit of patronising for Welsh rabbits after the theatres, to which Jack Johnson had first introduced him, he immediately made himself known; and then got all the information he desired, which carried on time until the commencement of the ballet, when he knew the sylphs would appear. This, at all events, would be very delightful; for up to the present time each of the great singers, and indeed the performers generally, instead of walking about elegant *salons* when they came off the stage, as Mr. Ledbury expected they would do, with the company present, all vanished away, some through concealed doors, and others up corkscrew staircases, being seen no more until their services were again required.

No sooner had the curtain fallen upon the *finale* of the opera, than the stage was in an instant covered with the carpenter's assistants, who suddenly appeared from all sides, as if by magic; and Mr. Ledbury was driven from his nook by a rush of wingmen after some fresh scenery. He accordingly went upon the stage, the front of which, immediately behind the drop, appeared to be the safest place—and here he watched the preparations for the ballet. Before long, peasant girls began to mingle with the scene-shifters, and a few fairies bore them company: one of whom, a little child of five years old, carrying a pewter-pot, approached a man in a paper-cap and fustian trousers, and saluted him with, "Please, father, mother says you're to leave her some."

Anon, a few of the second-class dancers, who filled up the intervals of the *grand pas*, appeared on the stage, and laying hold of the side-scenes, went through a series of exercises calculated to get their limbs into pliant working order. And, finally, the happy gentlemen of fashion, who had the *entrée*, sauntered round from their boxes to pay vapid compliments, and whisper soft—very soft—nothings to the *première danseuse*; or stand speechless, like Madame Tussaud's creations, smiling vacantly upon the throng around, with a most unexpressive inanity of countenance. Silly fellows, too, are the majority of these *flâneurs* of the side-scenes; and a great deal of diversion do they afford to the professional frequenters of the green-room, the majority of whom entertain a vulgar prejudice in favour of wit over wealth; whilst the humblest author of the establishment could command higher favours than the most popular of these lounging butterflies, in spite of all their would-be attentions and foolish expenditure.

At last, everything was in order, and the word was given to clear the stage, when those not engaged in the opening business fell back on either side between the wings, as the performers took their places.

and attitudes. Mr. Ledbury found himself enclosed by a group of laughing girls in book-muslin, who were to go on presently, all chattering at the top of their voices, some speaking English, and others French; whilst Titus, who did not know precisely what to say or do, now he found himself actually amongst the fairies he had thought so much about, looked very benignantly at all of them, and laughed at whatever they said, whether he understood it or not. But, nevertheless, he felt somewhat relieved when they left him, and went on the stage to execute a figure preparatory to the entrance of one of the chief dancers, who was to make her curtsy that night to an English audience for the first time, from the Académie Royale at Paris.

Before two minutes had passed, the *danseuse* walked down to the wing from which she was to go on, preparatory to taking her place on a cloud of gauze edged with silver leaf, and followed by her dresser, who was putting the last touch of pearl-powder upon her shoulders. As she ascended the nebulous car that was to bear her before the audience, Mr. Ledbury caught sight of her face, and thought her features were familiar to him. In another moment the signal was given for her appearance; but as she moved from behind the side-scene, and the first greeting of the *gants jaunes* in the stalls and the "omnibus" sounded from the front of the house, Ledbury became suddenly conscious that the *débutante* was no other than his old acquaintance of the Quartier Latin, who, although set down in the bills as Mademoiselle L'Etoile, he could not think of by any other name than her original one of—Aimée.

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CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE BRILL AT SOMERS TOWN.

THE low suburb, upon the precincts of which Johnson ascertained that his cousin's present abode was situated, comprehended a poor and thickly-populated district between the New Road and old St. Pancras Church, known then, as at present, by the title of "The Brill." It was formerly supposed, but upon somewhat questionable authority, to have been a Roman station; and seventy or eighty years ago an ingenious antiquary marked off the disposition of the troops, and the station of each general's tent, with singular minuteness, considering that he had nothing to go upon but a most uncertain hypothesis. This conjectural description has been some time contradicted; the various intrenchments spoken of, in all probability, having been thrown up during the civil wars; and "this singular glory of London, which rendered the walk *over the beautiful fields to the Brill* doubly

agreeable, when half a mile distant we could tread in the very-steps of the Roman camp-master, and of the greatest of Roman-generals," is at the present time totally effaced by those human-locusts, the builders, who destroy every green spot and open pasture. But to those who find as much pleasure in contemplating the present as the past, the Brill still presents scenes worth turning a little aside from the high road to witness.

On the Saturday evening subsequent to his interview with the girl in the gardens of the "Falcon," Johnson started from his present home to keep his promise with respect to visiting his cousin. Traversing the small streets in the neighbourhood of Bagnigge Wells, he crossed Gray's Inn Lane, and finally emerged in the New Road, opposite the small thoroughfare along which the greater part of his journey lay. It was a long narrow street of ill-conditioned shops and houses, and, viewed from the end, presented an apparently interminable row of flaring gas-lights on either side, which cast their fitful illumination over the dense mass of people who were jostling each other up and down the pavement and the road, until all was lost in the fiery haze and dust of the distance. On the edge of the footpath was a continuous row of stalls, so close together that they formed a perfect barrier; and it was only at certain intervals that the passenger could cross the street between these emporiums of the humblest merchandise; each of which had mounted its own glimmering light, embracing all the varieties of old lanterns, baskets, and paper-bags, peculiar to open stalls. And each of the owners was vaunting the excellence of his wares, or vociferating the low price of them, at the top of his voice, which added to the chanting of the numerous ballad-singers, the drunken clamour at the doors of the gin-shops, the oaths of men, the shrill upbraidings of their wives and the cries of the neglected children, together with the glare, dust, and confusion on every side, produced an *ensemble* almost bewildering.

The majority of the stalls were for the sale of cheap garden-stuff and common shell-fish: but there were others, like the French barrows, containing specimens of almost every article for domestic use, at one price. One or two—but these were rare—were covered with toys, none of which went beyond a few pence in value. They did not appear to find many purchasers: and how could they, in such a neighbourhood? Of what use were toys to those poor infants, who was never destined to know what the prerogatives of happy childhood were?—toys, for those brought up in misery and famine, whose heritage was the gutter, and whose sole reward for precocious labour was a hard word, but too often accompanied by a blow, to punish the want of that energy which the scanty meal and poisoned atmosphere had so completely crushed—toys for those who had no time for play, no rest from the daily drudgery but the few inadequate hours of fevered repose, or the parish-grave!

At the windows of one of the shops, an eating-house of the lowest order, in which were displayed coarse lumps of cooked meat, of almost repulsive appearance, stood a little child—a shoeless thing of three years old—unheeded by the crowd, as it gazed with large eyes and

famished looks at the steaming joints within. As Johnson passed he gave the infant a penny, as much for charity as to see what it would buy. The child entered the shop and purchased a small quantity of fried potatoes in a piece of paper. Another of the same age, who had known no want, would have expended the gift at once; but penury had already taught this little child the value of the gift, as well as to husband it, for it took a halfpenny in change.

Plunging still farther into the crowd of buyers and sellers, amongst which latter the butchers were most vociferous, as they tried to outdo each other in disposing of their meat by a species of auction, Johnson at length arrived at the end of the street, where it divides into two or three other thoroughfares. Not knowing precisely which to take, he entered a large public-house at the corner of two roads for information. The directions were, however, so confused, and given with such a total disregard to the various positions of right and left by different parties, who all pressed eagerly forward to answer Jack's questions, as soon as they perceived him to be respectable, that he thought it best to secure the services of an urchin who was handing lucifers about for sale to act as guide. The proposal being embraced with the utmost readiness by the boy in question, he started off again, possibly without paying that attention to the wish of the remaining company that they might drink his health, coupled with their creating him a noble captain, which the compliments demanded.

The wilderness of streets through which Johnson followed his guide appeared to be without end; but by degrees the tumult of traffic and concourse of people got less and less. Then they turned from the chief thoroughfare into smaller ones; and these in turn gave off various courts and alleys, to be again subdivided into dark passages and narrow entrances, which would have looked suspicious even in the broad open daylight, but now, in the obscurity of the straggling lamps, appeared so especially unsafe that Johnson grasped his stick with a firmer hold, and set his muscles for resisting any sudden attack as he threaded their intricacies. At length the houses ceased to be continuous, and became scattered in short rows of dwellings one storey high, with small gardens, or rather pieces of ground, more or less enclosed by rickety palings in front of them. The footpath, too, was no longer clearly defined, but degenerated to a mere track over the ground, which was in some places broken and intersected by dry ditches and unfinished foundations, and only lighted at long intervals, except where, now and then, some contiguous brick clamp dispelled the gloom in its immediate vicinity. But on looking back in the direction of the busy locality he had just before quitted, Johnson could make out its exact position from the cloud of red light which hung over the houses, illumined by the jets of gas in the streets below, and which almost bore the appearance of a distant conflagration.

They now approached the banks of a canal, along the side of which a few blackened and leafless trees rose like spectral sentinels, barely perceptible in the gloom; and, passing along the towing-path, were guided by the lights in the windows towards a small detached clump of houses, which the boy assured Johnson was the place he was seek-

ing. Dismissing his guide with a few halfpence. Jack approached one of the buildings, from which he heard the sound of several voices proceeding, and knocked with his stick against the door. An instantaneous silence followed the noise; then he heard whispering, and then the door was opened a little way, and a man demanded his business.

"Is this place Stevens' Rents?" inquired Johnson of the interrogator, who was eyeing him very suspiciously as he shaded the light of the candle with his hand.

A sulky answer in the affirmative was the only reply.

"I wished to see a person—named Morris," continued Johnson, after a moment's hesitation in pronouncing the name of his cousin. "Do you know anyone of that name living here?"

"That depends upon what's wanted with him," replied the man in the same surly tones. "Who are you?"

"It's all right, Matthews," exclaimed another voice, which Johnson directly knew to be Edward's. "Down with the chain!"

And directly afterwards the door was opened, admitting Jack into the passage.

It was apparently a public-house of the lowest description, whereof the man who had opened the door—a bull-headed fellow, something between a convict and a prize-fighter—was the landlord. Immediately behind the bar was a large room, in which was an old billiard-table, with the cloth grubbed and pieced in all directions; but some cues and balls, lying about it, showed that it was still played upon. The apartment was lighted by a hoop, in which were placed two or three candles, somewhat similar to the lamps used in travelling shows; and on some rough benches against the blackened and plastered walls were seated four or five persons of the most questionable appearance, smoking and drinking, amongst which party Johnson immediately perceived his cousin, who rose and came towards him.

"I am obliged to you for keeping your promise," said Morris, with somewhat more courtesy than he usually exhibited. "Mr. Johnson," he continued, by way of introduction to his companions, none of whose names, however, he mentioned in return.

Jack slightly acknowledged the half-insolent "Glad to see you, sir!" with which he was greeted by the rest of the company, and then looked inquiringly at Morris, as if uncertain whether their interview was to take place before them. The other guessed his meaning, and taking down one of the candles from the hoop, led the way to a small apartment at the other end of the room, in which one or two flock beds were laid upon the floor, and a few suspicious-looking packages and tubs disposed about. These things made up all that was movable, except a couple of guns, hanging over what had once been the fire-place, wherein the stove had given way to a rough temporary grate, formed of bricks and pieces of iron hoop, in which a few embers were still smouldering. The shutter of the window was closed outside, no less for concealment than to exclude the cold, for every other pane of glass in the casement was broken.

"You can sit down on any of these boxes," said Morris, as he

closed the door after them. "Let me see if I can revive the fire. There is nothing to shelter this house from the wind, and it is as cold to-night as if it were the middle of winter."

He threw a few chips and shavings that were heaped in the corner of the room upon the embers; and then, panting with the exertion, took his seat upon a small tub, opposite to his cousin.

"You are very ill, Morris," said Johnson, after a few moments of silence, during which he had been gazing at the other, who was evidently in the last stage of his disease.

"I begin to think it is something beyond a slight cold, after all," returned Morris; "it has lasted so long. But then I have taken no advice, nor have I been able to live as I ought to do; possibly, if I could, it would go away."

"I fear it has gone too far already," observed Johnson.

"Well, then, it may carry me off, and I shall cheat the gaoler," replied Morris, with a ghastly attempt to laugh; "who cares, or who will? By the way, that brings us to our business. Have you guessed why I wished to see you?"

"I could tell pretty nearly," replied Jack. "It was about the money which you placed in my hands in the winter."

"You are right, and you have got it with you?" asked Morris, eagerly. "You have brought it here, have you not?"

"I have not, indeed," replied Johnson coldly. "I did not think you would expect it."

"You have spent some of it?" continued Morris.

"Not one farthing of it have I touched. I told you, when you gave it to me, it should be sacred; and I have kept my word faithfully as I intend to do in other respects."

"But how am I to get it, then?" asked the other sharply, with less courtesy than he had hitherto used.

"Now listen, Morris," said Johnson, calmly, "and let us understand each other. When you made over that money to me, I told you I would keep it untouched. I have done so, although, Heaven knows, a sovereign would have been most welcome to me. But at the same time, I made no condition of restoring it to you; for it is not your own."

"You are bound in honour, sir, to give it to me when I ask it," exclaimed Morris with excitement.

"In honour," returned Johnson, "it should be given up to those from whom you took it. I would have done this long ago; but I saw no plan which did not involve one or the other of us. Any trifling sum you may absolutely require I will endeavour to supply you with from my own means; but you must not expect to see that money again."

"I will have it!" screamed Morris, in a paroxysm of rage, as he started from his seat. "Thief! scoundrel!" he continued, as he seized Johnson's coat with all the energy he could command. "I will have that money—it is my own. You shall not go until you promise to restore it."

"This is folly, Morris," returned Johnson, easily freeing himself

from the grasp of his cousin. "You know that I am firm when I have once made up my mind. I have said it."

"You shall not go, I tell you," continued the other, advancing to the door. "Here! Wilson—Howard—some of you—come here."

Two or three of the individuals in the adjoining room immediately left their seats and obeyed the summons, and one of them, placing himself in the doorway, attempted to stop Johnson as he made a rush unto the next apartment. But Jack, collecting all his energy, drove him on one side with great violence, so that he reeled and fell as his antagonist darted into the billiard-room.

"To the door, Matthews!" cried Morris to the landlord. "Do not let him pass!"

The man did not understand the cause of this sudden tumult; but it was sufficient for him to know that his companions did not wish the stranger to go out, and he therefore closed the door and put his back against it. Grasping his stick, Johnson dealt him a heavy blow with it across the face, which was immediately followed by a livid weal, and the next instant his features were covered with blood. But Matthews still kept his post, and before Johnson could drive him away, the rest of the party were close up to him, except Morris, who, lacking power in his emaciated limbs sufficient to join the assailants, remained at the end of the room.

Throwing away his stick, which had snapped from the force of the last blow, Jack now seized a heavy lancewood cue that was lying upon the table, and prepared to attack afresh the man who was guarding the door; but as he raised his arm with this intention, he was seized by some of the party behind, and dragged forcibly down upon the ground, the back of his head striking the boards with a violence that stunned him. The rest of his assailants immediately seized his arms and legs, as they tied the latter together with their neck-handkerchiefs; and then, whilst he was yet scarcely sensible, they half dragged, half thrust him upstairs, with their united efforts. And entering a small unfurnished room at the top of the house, they laid him upon the floor, and there left him, locking the door on the outside, as they descended to renew their game at billiards and its accompanying potatoes.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE ESCAPE OF JOHNSON FROM THE HOUSE ON THE CANAL.

AN hour or two passed away, and then all was perfectly still in Stevens' Rents. It was a quiet place enough by day, disturbed by little except the passing of the barge-horses upon the towing-path, and even that was upon the other side of the water; but at night the traffic ceased, and left it in unbroken repose. The dissipated crew in the public-houses had finished their drunken orgies, and sought their beds or benches, as the case might be, in various apartments or recesses of the building, and were now wrapped in a heavy sleep, indicated by their thickened and intoxicated respiration. No other sound was heard, except the occasional creaking produced by the barges in the canal, as they grated against the edges of the wharfs, or the scuffling of the rats amongst the rafters, and behind the dilapidated wainscoting of the apartments. Now and then some remote bell told the progress of the quarters as the hours passed away; but its echoes were allowed to disperse in uninterrupted reverberations, and then all was hushed and noiseless as before—possibly appearing the more so from the fleeting sound of the monitor, which thus kept its continuous vigil, whilst all around was wrapped in silence and oblivion.

It was not until the night was considerably advanced that Johnson had recovered his senses sufficiently to be conscious of the situation in which he was placed. His first ideas upon reviving from the effects of the attack were confused and indistinct. He thought he was at home in his own chamber. Then a vague recollection of something serious having occurred to him broke in upon his wandering recollections; and as his perception returned, a violent pain at the back of his head, a feeling of extreme debility from loss of blood, and the uneasiness and constraint from the handkerchief which was knitted tightly round his swollen ankles, recalled all the circumstances of the late outrage, up to the period when he had received the blow. For beyond this he remembered nothing.

The moon was shining at intervals as the patches of black clouds, hurried by the night-wind, passed from before her face; and her light fell into the apartment through the open window, enabling Johnson to form some idea of the interior of the dismantled chamber, or rather loft, in which he had been left by the associates of his lawless cousin. It had been used at a former period as a warehouse or granary, and the fragment of a small wooden crane—all that had not been used for fire-wood by the inmates—was still fixed to the outer wall, at the side of the window overlooking the dull, half-stagnant water of the canal—the gable end of the building, on the top storey of which the room was situated, coming down to the water's edge.

To free himself from the handkerchief which confined his legs was

a very easy task ; and then, assuring himself that all was quiet, he made a survey of the room, in the hope of discovering some chance of escape. But there was nothing that presented itself. The door was fast closed on the outer side, and even the chimney, through which he could have gained the roof, and which was but a few feet in height (as he discovered from the faint light that came down it), had been rendered partly impracticable by some iron bars placed across it.

He looked through the unglazed aperture which had once contained the casement, in the hope of discovering signs that might denote proximity of any life or vigilance. But all was still. The huge barges lay motionless upon the water, like gigantic coffins, with their coverings of heavy black tarpaulin. Even these were barely discernible beyond a short distance from the Rents in the uncertain and fitful moonlight ; in spite of a few glimmering lamps, which hung from the posts along the different wharfs, struggling against the gusts of wind that sported through their broken glass.

In spite of his natural courage and heedlessness of danger, Johnson's heart sank within him as he perceived the small chance of escape that offered itself. He was as completely at the disposal of his assailants as if he had been a caged animal. It was true that his present situation overlooked a comparatively public way ; but when daylight returned they would possibly secure him in some more secluded division of the building, without food, light, or the slightest hope of communicating with those outside. They were men who had long dwelt without the pale of honesty or amenability ; they would murder him for aught he knew ; and by what traces could the deed be discovered ? for he had entrusted the object of his mission to no one—not even to Ledbury. A sack—a cord—a few large stones, and the black water of the canal would alone share the secret of the crime with its perpetrators. For an instant he gave way to the idea that his cousin would perhaps preserve him ; but Morris had gone on from one evil-doing to another, each step the more desperate to cover the preceding one, so that but small reliance could be placed upon his protection. It was evident that Morris was merely a link in the chain of guilt that bound together the interests of himself and his depraved associates ; and as such he would be compelled to follow wherever the majority of them chose to lead. Nor was it probable, Johnson thought upon reflection, that they would suffer him to go, when the next hour might deliver them up to the police, upon his single word of information. Once more he examined every portion of the room, and once more did he find the utter hopelessness of effecting his escape : until, worn out in mind and body, he at last threw himself in despair upon the rude floor of the chamber.

A few minutes had scarcely elapsed, when a sound, apparently coming from below, attracted his attention. He thought he heard the staircase creak—it was old and insecure, and the weight of an infant would have caused the alarm. In a few seconds the noise was repeated, and then again and again ; but still with lengthened pauses between each sound, as if someone was ascending with cautious and subdued steps. It came nearer, until at last it was audible at the very

door of the apartment; and then Johnson, breathless with anxiety, could plainly distinguish some person feeling about in the dark on the outside of the panels for the bolt. Next he heard a chain very gently removed, and as quietly dropped at the side, and then the door slowly opened, as he started upon his feet, prepared against all odds to defend himself to the utmost.

"Who's there?" he cried, as the visitor entered the room.

"Hush! for God's sake, or you are lost," was the reply. "They are all asleep, and I have come to release you. Do you not recollect me?"

And then Johnson became aware that he was addressed by the unfortunate companion of his cousin—the girl at whose request he had visited Morris that evening.

"There is not a moment to be lost," continued the girl. "It will soon be morning, and then they will be moving again, for they go out early."

As she spoke she approached the window, and taking a coil of old rope, which she held on her arm, fastened one end of it to the old woodwork of the crane, while she allowed the other to drop down into the water.

"I do not think that will bear my weight," said Johnson, as he looked at the cord, which was made of several pieces knotted together, and in some parts fearfully insecure. "However, I can swim if I fall into the canal."

"This is not for you to escape by," replied the girl, in a whisper; "but they will find it here, and think you have done so. They would kill me if they knew I had let you go. Now, slip off your boots and follow me; you can carry them in your hand."

"Letty," observed Johnson emphatically, as he hesitated at the door, "you are not playing me false? Remember, it has been through you that all this has occurred."

"False!" answered the girl, with energy; "no, on my soul, you may trust me, even if I become the sufferer by it! Hark! is not that someone moving below?"

They both listened attentively for a few seconds in the keenest suspense; but the alarm was merely produced by the broken sleep of one of the party in the billiard-room, more restless than the others; and presently all was again still.

"Now, then," continued the girl, "wait on the landing whilst I fasten up the door. I must leave everything precisely as I found it, or they will be sure to suspect me."

Carefully drawing the bolt, and replacing the chain, Letty descended the staircase with extreme caution, followed by Johnson. In spite of all their care, however, the stairs creaked with every foot-fall, although their actual steps were inaudible; and it was with great satisfaction that Jack found himself upon the ground floor, without having caused any alarm. But now the most hazardous part of the venture arrived; for they had to cross the billiard-room and pass the bar, in the former of which several fellows were lying about upon the benches, floor, and even the table, and in the latter the landlord had

taken up his position for the night, as much from want of other accommodation as to guard his property, of which it was the chief depository.

A dull lamp, whose long smoking wick could barely draw up the coarse oil with which it was trimmed, was burning on the mantelpiece, and, as it threw its quivering shadows upon the forms and countenances of the inmates, it appeared to endow them with motion, albeit their deep prolonged breathing gave evidence of the heavy slumbers in which they were plunged. But the expiring light was sufficient to keep Johnson and his conductor from disturbing any of the sleepers by inadvertently coming in contact with them. Not a word passed between them, for it would have been imprudent to risk the lowest whisper; but Letty, impressing caution by signs, and pointing out the direction in which they were to go, moved towards the door, Johnson's every sense being rendered doubtly acute by the excitement.

In the centre of the room a powerful fellow was lying, stretched at full length upon the boards, and it was absolutely necessary to step over him. The girl passed without the slightest noise; but as Johnson prepared to follow, the man began to murmur in his sleep a few disjointed and scarcely intelligible words, as he shifted his position and turned on one side. Fearful that he was about to awake, Johnson leaped forward at all hazards, and clearing his prostate form, was again close to Letty; but in the hurry of his movement he knocked down a large cue that was lying against the billiard-table, and it fell upon the ground with a loud noise, striking the legs of the man who was asleep. They were close to the fireplace, and the same instant Letty extinguished the lamp, and, grasping Johnson's wrist with almost convulsive force, kept him from moving another step.

The noise had startled the sleepers, and caused one or two of them to awake from their repose, as they rubbed their eyes, and endeavoured to penetrate the darkness of the apartment, whilst they inquired the cause of the alarm. The man who had been struck lifted the cue from his legs, and, under the impression that he had kicked it down in his sleep, explained to his comrades that it was "all right!" as he pushed it away from him under the table. A few muttered some oaths at the disturbance, or drowsily asked what it was o'clock, and if it was daylight; and then receiving no answer, turned round again to their repose.

It was a minute of painful suspense to Johnson and Letty, and they scarcely ventured to draw their breath during this short commotion. Nor did they make the slightest movement until they were assured that all was again quiet; and then it was in the greatest uncertainty, from the perfect darkness. But the girl was tolerably well acquainted with the position of the various things in the room, and, groping with one hand for the different articles of furniture to guide her, she led Johnson by the other until they arrived at the door. Matthews was snoring in the bar as they passed. The effect of the blows on the head he had received from Johnson, coupled with the quantity of brandy he had afterwards taken as a remedy, had plunged him into a stupor very little short of apoplexy, so that they were under no very great appre-

hension of arousing him, whilst his loud stertorous breathing assisted to cover any sound from their own footsteps.

To open the street door was the last thing to be accomplished, although not the least hazardous; for the bolts were corroded, and moved with difficulty, and the lock was also damaged, requiring the key to be held in a particular direction before it could be turned. However, this was at length accomplished, the door grated upon its hinges, and Johnson stood once more in the free open air, as the grey of morning was beginning to creep over the adjoining suburbs; but stealthily, and with timidity, as if the presence of the moon, which was still shining, rebuked it for encroaching too speedily upon the dominion of night and silence.

"You see I have not betrayed you," said the girl. "You are safe now, and at liberty to depart."

"I ought not to have mistrusted your intentions," replied Johnson; "but you must be aware that it was through compliance with your request I came here, and I could not tell what further snare might have been set for me."

"I know—I know it all," returned Letty. "I felt this, and from the moment I learnt what had taken place, I determined, at all hazards, to release you. I have kept my word."

"And what can I do in return for this?" asked Johnson. "Is there anything in which I can serve you, now or in future?"

He would have offered her money, but there was something in the demeanour of the girl which checked his intention, and he felt that it would have been immediately rejected, even by one so poor and friendless as herself. Society would have laughed with bitter irony at the idea of delicacy or virtue existing in one whom it had pronounced fallen and degraded; but it is possible that the holiest attributes of woman's nature may still exist, long after the one fatal error has, in the opinion of the heartless world, consigned her, without distinction, to the lowest abyss of guilt. A hundred contingent circumstances—in many instances inevitable, as they are in the abstract guileless—may conspire to bring about the first deviation from the paths of rectitude; but it is the silent taunt and cold desertion of the world that accomplishes the rest, and drives its victim to the last decadence from purity.

"You can oblige me, if you will grant one request," answered Letty; "it is the only one I shall ask. I scarcely know if you will think it right in me to do so, after what has happened, but I know that you are generous and forgiving."

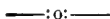
"And what is it? If in my power to comply, you may depend upon me."

"Do not let anyone know what has passed this night. I ask it for the sake of your cousin. I do not care for the others; but Morris must share any ill-luck that may come upon them, and a word from you can now give them all up. May I beg this?"

"You may rely upon me," replied Johnson, "in the same manner as I trusted you; the secret is safe between us. Can I be useful to you otherwise?"

"No—no—not at present," returned the girl, hurriedly. "When you can, I will once more take the liberty of seeing you. But I must return to the house, for it will soon be morning. Good-bye—and recollect—do not betray us."

Johnson bade her farewell, whilst Letty once more entered the building, silently closing the door after her. And then he traversed the waste ground that he had crossed the night before, and, following the same course as well as he could call the localities to mind, at last reached the populous districts of The Brill. At the end of one of the streets a solitary night-cab was standing, which he directly engaged; and in twenty minutes more was put down—faint, chilled, and dispirited—beneath the crimson lamp that threw a mystic stain upon the pavement and the opposite shutters, in front of the abode of Mr. Rawkins.



CHAPTER XXXIX.

HOW MR. LEDBURY APPEARED UNEXPECTEDLY IN A BALLET AT HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

THERE is something amazingly amusing in unrehearsed stage effects; and for our own part we always enjoy a play much more when the machinery goes wrong, or the actors do not come on when they ought (which usually provokes some diverting extempore dialogue from the characters who are before the audience, to carry on time), than if everything is in order and perfection; and we think ourselves especially favoured if any of the cats belonging to the dressers or stage door-keepers make their first appearance in public without being announced. In point of high drollery and excitement, this last occurrence only finds a parallel when a dog is chased from Tattenham Corner to the end of the line, amidst the cheers of the spectators, after the course has been cleared for the Derby—a piece of sporting, in our own opinion, far more attractive than all the races that were ever run. A pantomimic trick which only works half-way, and then obstinately sticks where it is, is amazingly funny; possibly more so when it will not work at all; and we never express any disapprobation at finding a pair of flats put in different grooves, and representing a scene half palace, half robber's hut, when they meet. Indeed, the last *contretemps* teaches a fine moral lesson to contemplative minds by showing that the materials which compose the court and the cottage are formed of the same elements, the Dutch metal alone making the difference. But, although these mistakes are most entertaining to a great portion of the audience, they do not appear so outrageously laughable to the prompter, stage-manager, or more particularly those

who are to be fined on the following Saturday for their neglect when they apply at the treasury—a portion of the house gradually falling to decay, from long misuse, in the majority of our English theatres.

The unexpected apparition of Aimée had so bewildered Mr. Ledbury for the instant, that he scarcely knew where he was. His first return of consciousness, however, was manifested by his rushing down to the prompter's box at the first entrance, in order to catch another glimpse of the *danseuse* as she left her throne of canvas clouds and bounded to the front of the stage. But from this position he was summarily ejected by a gentleman who ruled the storm, and directed the elements—an Æolus in shirt-sleeves and a paper-cap. And, moreover, the *entrée* of Aimée being the signal for various other sylphs to appear simultaneously up traps, and down cords, and through rose-trees, and out of fountains, the whole mechanical appliances of the stage required to be put into action at once. Hence everybody became suddenly in the way of everybody else, and after Mr. Ledbury had been assaulted with considerable violence by a butterfly, and had narrowly escaped being knocked into a water-lily, and carried on to the stage therein, he contrived to take refuge behind the back-scene, at the upper part of the theatre, where he was comparatively unmolested. And, moreover, feeling rather fatigued with standing so long upon his legs, and being pushed about in so many directions, he took his seat upon a piece of mechanism that was in the centre of the stage, having first ascertained its stability and sustaining power.

He remained here for some little time, listening to the music through the scene, and endeavouring to muster up some polite French salutation in which to address his old acquaintance, should he find an opportunity of speaking to her, when a loud burst of sound from the orchestra, of unusual force, accompanied by the beating of a gong, betokened the advent of some extraordinary situation in the progress of the ballet. At the same moment he felt the construction upon which he was seated vibrate beneath him; and immediately afterwards, to his intense horror, it gradually rose from the floor, bearing him upon the top of it towards the flies. He had placed himself upon the summit of a fountain, which had projected through a trap a few feet above the stage, its lower portion being still in the inferior regions, from which the winches and crabs of the scene-shifters were rapidly elevating it!

But this was not all. The scene behind which he had taken refuge from the confusion, and which to the audience represented a conglomeration of clouds and stars, divided into two, and drew off on either side, as far as the comparatively narrow *coulisses* of the theatre would admit. A blaze of light burst in upon Mr. Ledbury's bewildered gaze, and he perceived—"giorno d'orrore!"—that he was in sight of the audience. But whilst a slight burst of ironical welcome sounded from the gallery—for the opera gallery occasionally indulges in pleasantries, like its fellows at other theatres, even to applauding the talented man who exhibits such habitual dexterity in waving the water-pot to lay the dust before the ballet—before the majority of the audience had discovered the novel water-deity who rose before them,

the fountain, by the happiest chance in the world, began to play. Jets of blue gauze, edged with silver leaf, rose from the summit, and began to dance up and down, through the exertions of various unseen individuals on the mezzanine floor below, and these concealed Mr. Ledbury from the spectators in front, all save the top of his hat, which now and then appeared as the waters sank below their ordinary level. Yet was it to him a minute of fearful agony; one of those situations of extreme terror in which, authors tell us, the sensations of years become condensed in the conscious agony of the passing moment. He looked round, and could distinguish the lights of the vast theatre through the half-transparent screen that covered him. He saw the apparently interminable perspective of human heads; he heard the subdued murmur of applause that greeted some favourite *naïades* who emerged from the base of the fountain; and he trembled lest his weight should bring the whole concern down together upon their heads, for as it rose higher it quivered in a frightful manner beneath its superincumbent burden.

A few minutes thus passed away, which appeared to Mr. Ledbury so many hours, as nearly as his confounded ideas would allow him to take account of time. Then the *naïades* having executed a *pas de ever-so-many*, led by the *débutante* of the night, re-entered the fountain, and another vibration quivered through its framework as it began to sink down to its former level, creaking and shaking in a manner terrific to experience. As it neared the stage Mr. Ledbury's imagination pictured everybody connected with the theatre waiting to tear him to pieces for his temerity—for the instant, he endowed the water-nymphs with divine attributes, and expected little else than meeting with the fate of Orpheus from their hands for daring to profane their sacred fountains. But a fresh attack of conflicting emotions was in store for him. As the mechanism neared the ground he perceived to his great joy that no one was waiting to receive him, and was congratulating himself upon the auspicious termination of his aerial flight, when, instead of stopping where he had first found it, the dancing water went lower and lower, until his head was level with the boards.

Clinging convulsively to the wood-work, he had but time to cast a wild, imploring glance on either side, to perceive a few people standing behind the wings, in everyday dresses, by the side of various slim-legged gentlemen attired as satyrs, when, after a short stoppage, to dispose of some of the lower portions of the machinery, the summit of the tallest jet sank below the stage in company with his head, and immediately afterwards a sliding trap met over him, closing with a shock that entered his very soul.

Down—down he kept going, but now it was in comparative darkness—in a region of beams and pulleys, of huge wheels and mighty ropes, all in motion around him, and threatening every instant to entangle him in their complicated movements, and tear him limb from limb. Had a high-pressure engine on board a vast Atlantic steamer become desirous of taking a little fresh air, and mounted for that purpose amidst the shrouds and blocks of the rigging whilst

it continued to labour, the scene could not have been more astounding. Once he had a faint vision of some feminine creation in book-muslin and silk tights, who was prepared to ascend, and whom he perceived by the dim light of an old lamp as he went down; but his mind was in such a state of *bouleversement* that he was not certain whether he gazed at substance or the image of one of the beauties above, still left upon the bewildered retina, as he had seen atoms in the sunbeams after he had shut his eyes—small things that danced in insolent hilarity before his pupils, but flew off nowhere the instant he attempted to direct his gaze towards them.

At last, as he thought he was approaching the very centre of the earth—a fearful dominion, which he had once seen portrayed in the opening scene of a pantomime—the course of the mechanism was arrested, and came to a standstill, for it could sink no farther. The attention of the men who were accomplishing its descent was directed to the various windlasses which they had been turning, and Mr. Ledbury jumped off unperceived, and once more stood upon the ground, screened from observation by two enormous wooden supports. Here he remained some time, his knowledge of the way out being as vague as that of Sindbad when immured in the funeral cave; but in a manner similar to that celebrated navigator, he determined to follow the first living thing he encountered who might guide him from the subterraneous locality.

At length the pot-boy of a neighbouring tavern in the Haymarket—who enjoyed that unreserved *entrée* to the stage which so many were anxious to possess, albeit he thought but little of the privilege—passed close to him with some empty pewters from which the rulers of the spirits and water had been from time to time refreshing themselves. Following instantly upon his track, Mr. Ledbury threaded an infinity of tortuous passages, and ascended a variety of stairs and ladders, until he found himself once more in the passage which led to the hall of the stage-door. In another minute, to his infinite relief, he stood beneath the portico of the theatre; and, exhausted with fatigue and embarrassment, rushed to a contiguous oyster-shop to recruit his shattered energies, and in furtherance of his homeward journey to Islington, to derive all the stamina from his supper that it was in the power of lobsters and bottled porter to bestow. But independently of his fearful adventure, one feeling of discontent connected with the events of the evening was uppermost through all, which was, that he had not been able to speak to Aimée.

CHAPTER XL.

MR. RAWKINS CONTESTS AN ELECTION FOR SURGEON TO A DISPENSARY WITH MR. KOOPS.

IT may be recollected that in an earlier part of these chronicles we alluded to the medical man who resided in the next street to Mr. Rawkins' establishment, as having been upon a time instigated by jealousy and irritation, attendant upon losing the situation of surgeon to the police-force—"spargere voces in vulgum ambiguas," as Mr. Prodzers expressed it, when he was grinding up his old Latin to pass the hall—with the intent of lowering Mr. Rawkins' high professional character in the neighbourhood. But Mr. Rawkins, with the proper bearing of a truly great mind, had paid little attention to these calumnies, beyond occasionally expressing the great desire he felt to considerably derange the normal facial anatomy of the aforesaid practitioner—for, although that individual had been known to assert that his opponent retailed Old Brown Windsor-soap and jujubes, with a suspicion of lucifers, the absence of those articles in the shop-window was a sufficient denial to the affirmation. But for all that, the aspersion was not forgotten, and a hatred arose peculiar to the quarrels of medical men. The other practitioner at all times refused to meet Mr. Rawkins in private or public consultation; and Mr. Rawkins, in return, looked down upon the other practitioner as a paltry fellow, who had neither strength to reduce a dislocation of the weakest joints in the human frame, nor common energy enough to pick up fifty stones, placed a yard apart, with his mouth within a given time, both which performances Mr. Rawkins flattered himself he shone in, rather.

Mr. Koops, for so was the other practitioner called, was some years younger than his adversary, and, consequently, had been but a short time in practice. He was one of that large class of medical men who are perpetually starting up in London, as soon as they have cleared their examination, without any particular prospects or connections, believing they have merely to put a brass-plate on their door, and envelop themselves, when at home, in a fierce dressing-gown, to get at once into extensive practice. Looking upon a wife as part of a medical man's stock-in-trade, to be established synchronously with his bottles, pill-rollers, and spatulas, Mr. Koops was married, and two infant Koopses completed his family circle—upon whom one maid-servant attended, in common with the lodgers, who had taken the first floor unfurnished, of which state it was still a very good imitation. The son of the milkwoman came for two or three hours in the middle of the day, upon consideration of what he could get, to perform the same feats of industry which Bob accomplished at Mr. Rawkins', only his occupations were not quite so multifarious. He was the younger brother of Mrs. Grimley's boy in buttons—the same one who fell through the

room of the supper-room at Ledbury's—and as the fraternal page's suit became worn and outgrown, it descended to him by right of gift, so that Mr. Koops, to all appearance, kept a servant in a species of livery, to his great pride and self-gratulation; although at an earlier period of his professional career, at the time he was attending a Radical tinman at the corner, he had been known to indulge in long diatribes upon the great wrong of investing a fellow-creature with the buttoned badges of civilised slavery. But since then he had found it somewhat dangerous for medical men to interfere in political opinion; and, in consequence, gave in silently to the conventional prejudices of the world.

The *ménage* of Mr. Koops was, however, not well arranged upon the whole. It was a perfect specimen of that class of establishments where you are always kept at the door a long time after knocking; and during this interregnum of sound, before you ventured to pull the bell, you heard whisperings in the passage, and distant scufflings up and down the stairs, with sideway glimpses of faces peeping through the blinds, or apparitions of heads that popped out into the area, and then disappeared again. Despite its being a medical man's, it was just that sort of house at which you never firmly expected to find anybody at home that you asked for; or, if you did, you had always to wait for their advent some little time, in a crumby room, redolent of *bouquet du mouton*, with all sorts of odd things hastily stowed away, and only half-concealed behind the sofa-cushions, and under the squabs of the chairs. And then Mr. Koops generally made his appearance, all confusion and cordiality, with the ends of his fingers covered with magnesia, apologising for the disorder, and stating that he was obliged to dispense his own medicines that day, as his assistant—an entirely imaginary personage—had gone into the country for a holiday. Where the surgery actually was nobody ever knew but Mr. Koops and the boy; where the patients lived who were supposed to take the medicine from it was a secret in the possession of Mr. Koops alone; and how Mr. Koops himself lived was a deeper enigma than all. For Bob at Rawkins', during some of his more lucid intervals, had lured the boy attached to the opposition establishment into a confession that he had been strictly charged by his master never to go out without the oil skin-covered basket in his hand, which looked professional, although the said basket more frequently contained a pound of sausages than four draughts, as Bob had proved by ocular demonstration. And there was also an empty six-ounce bottle, tied up in paper, that he was compelled from time to time to carry through populated streets, wherein the people sat at their windows, and having paraded it thus before the eyes of the world, he was accustomed to put it in his pocket, and then return home empty-handed, as though he had left it with some invalid.

It was at the precise period of the latest events in our history that Mr. Stokes, the baker, privately informed Mr. Koops one evening how the present medical man attached to the contiguous dispensary was about to resign in consequence of a hospital appointment—begging him, however, at the same time, not to mention it, as it was at present

quite a secret, and he would not have told it to anyone else. And as Mr. Stokes, who was great in parochial and social diplomacy, went directly afterwards to Mr. Rawkins, and confided to him the same intelligence, in the same terms, with the additional hint, darkly thrown out, that he thought it not unlikely Mr. Koops would put up for it, Mr. Rawkins immediately determined to contest the point with his opponent—the situation not being in itself particularly lucrative, but leading to many other benefits and introductions, as is the case with most public medical appointments—which advantages, after charity, and the delights of administering to the wants of suffering poverty, are the chief inducements for the applicants to give up so much time and outlay in securing their election.

As soon as the resignation was publicly announced, Mr. Rawkins set to work. Jack Johnson had remained at home for several evenings after his adventure at the Brill; and, with his able assistance, he drew up an address to the governors, which was inserted in the morning papers, at the expense of ten shillings for each, and in which he affirmed his intention, should he be honoured with their support, of devoting his best energies to the welfare of their admirable institution, with other like phrases, which the printers would find convenient to have always stereotyped, as they are sure to be used. Mr. Koops was also well up in the field; and, in addition, put a lot of letters after his name, which, as nobody could understand them, were supposed to indicate high foreign honours. It would evidently be a close race, for although the position of Mr. Rawkins with the police and the parish generally was greatly in his favour, yet Mr. Koops had many influential supporters, not so much from regard for him as dislike to his opponent.

Having procured the list of the governors, and arranged them in localities, Mr. Rawkins hired a gig by the day, and, dressing in extreme propriety, was driven from one abode to the other by Jack Johnson to solicit votes and interest; the establishment being left to the guidance of Mr. Proldgers, who took advantage of the occurrence to keep open house to half the students at the University in the back-room, which assemblage he termed, "The Committee for conducting Mr. Rawkins' Election, that sat every day," as, indeed, it did, and for a very long time.

The first visit Mr. Rawkins paid was to the landlady of the public house at the end of the street. As he was reported to be paying his address to her as well, he was pretty certain of her support; but he called for the sake of appearances, and to request her to sound his praises before the maid-servants of the district when they came for beer, in company with their own jugs and the door-key. However, the landlady had a vote, for she subscribed to the Dispensary upon the strength of furnishing porter to the convalescents; and she had entertained no opinion of Mr. Koops' abilities since she found he had his beer from the brewer, of harmless quality and requiring quick draught from four-and-a-half-gallon tubs.

"Now, Mr. Johnson," said Mr. Rawkins, as he jumped into the gig, "who's next on the list?"

"Mr. Starling," answered Jack, looking at the pamphlet; "there is a mark of promise against him."

"We need not call there," continued Rawkins. "I've promised his boy one of my handsomest tumblers."

"Glasses?"

"No, no—pigeons. It will be sure to find its way back again after a few days, so that it will be no loss. Who comes after?"

"Mrs. Pim, next door: marked 'shy.'"

"Ah, yes: that's all through Proddgers' making love to her niece over the dust-bin, and painting her cat all manner of colours. Um! old girl—always thinks she's ill? nothing of the kind—tough as a cheap turkey, and would talk the devil to death about her complaints."

"Do you mean to call?" asked Jack.

"Of course I do," replied Mr. Rawkins. "I'm not afraid of any living old woman in the universe. Here we are—pull up!"

And although perfectly aware that his reception by Mrs. Pim would be doubtful, Mr. Rawkins descended, and knocked at the door with a violence intended to slightly paralyze her faculties, and convey a proper idea of his own importance. It was answered with singular celerity, and then he was forthwith shown by the servant into the little parlour where Mrs. Pim was sitting.

"How do you do, ma'am?" said Mr. Rawkins, with great courtesy, as he entered. "I hope I see you well?"

The old lady, who had drawn herself up in great state the instant she heard Mr. Rawkins' name announced, replied in a tragedy voice, which, as respected its liquidity, might be termed weak Mrs. Siddons-and-water—

"I am ill, sir; I am never well. Sir, I have a pain as if a black man was screwing a brass-knob into my brain."

"Ah! very distressing indeed," said Mr. Rawkins, who did not exactly know at the moment under what category he should class the symptoms; a little rheumatism, Mrs. Pim—eh?"

"No, sir," returned the old lady, as grandly as before—"no, sir, no rheumatism; electricity of the nerves. I am one large living battery, sir."

Mr. Rawkins was about to suggest the propriety of coating herself with tinfoil, to collect the electric fluid on the surface, when Mrs. Pim recommenced—

"My veins, sir, feel like lucifer matches in a chip box, and all lie over one another. You never heard of spiders in the heart, I dare say?"

"Can't say I ever did, ma'am," said Mr. Rawkins.

"No—of course not—how should you, sir? I have them," continued the old lady somewhat mysteriously; you can do nothing for that though, sir."

"There is a great deal of illness about," said Mr. Rawkins, trying to bring round the conversation to the object of his visit. "The dispensaries require the greatest experience and attention on the part of the medical officer."

"Ah, yes! I suppose so," replied Mrs. Pim. "But, sir, the poor people do not know what illness is; it is all fancy with them, and the want of proper education."

"They require a medical man who can distinguish between reality and imposition," observed Mr. Rawkins, getting a chance of speaking: "one whose muscular power and herculean frame can stand perpetual fatigue, and exert proper authority—one whose love of animals will teach him to regard the poor as such, and treat them accordingly."

"That is precisely my opinion, sir," returned Mrs. Pim.

"I respect you for it, madam," continued Mr. Rawkins, thinking he had gained a point; "and, in that idea, I have come to solicit your vote. The poor will always command my best energies, as well as those of my talented assistants, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Prodgers."

"Sir," exclaimed Mr. Pim, with energy, as she heard the last name mentioned, "your young men painted my cat's face like a pantomime buffon's—do you mean to say they would not do the same to their prodgers?"

"I hope—I trust, ma'am, you labour under a delusion," observed Mr. Rawkins, somewhat discomposed by the charge brought against his "talented assistants."

"I never labour under delusion, sir," replied Mrs. Pim, with increasing excitement, as she called the bygone insult to mind. "If I had so, I should not have promised my vote where I have done so."

"May I venture to hope——"

"I have signed my proxy, sir, for Mr. Kooops—a deserving young man, with a family of children to feed, instead of guinea-pigs," interrupted the old lady, still firing up with the recollection, and wishing to say bitter things. "I was interested for him upon principle."

"Hang your principle, and your interest too, madam!" exclaimed Mr. Rawkins, as suddenly changing his tones. "Why did you not tell me so before?"

And starting up from his chair, he drew himself into a classical attitude of such threatening import that the old lady was struck dumb with terror, and seizing the ornamental bell-rope, pulled it down in mistake for the modest red cord which hung behind it.

"I shall recollect this, madam," continued Mr. Rawkins, "and you will repent it. Another time do not occupy the precious moments of a medical man by your insane twaddle. Good morning, madam. When we again meet, may you be in Hanwell or Bedlam!"

Banging the door after him with a force that shook down all the fire-irons, producing that most pleasing of domestic clatters attendant upon their collision, Mr. Rawkins gave vent to various oaths, better called up in the imagination than put down upon paper; kicked the cat, who chanced to be in his way, to the bottom of the kitchen stairs; and then assuming various positions on the door-step, peculiar to the part of the Monster in "Frankenstein," got into his gig, again,

and drove away as he recounted the particulars of the interview to Johnson.

They called at several other houses with varying success. Some did not intend to interfere at all in the business: others intended to vote for Mr. Koops, because they thought Mr. Rawkins would not be able to attend to all his different appointments: and others, again, promised him their interest at once. Altogether, the chances were pretty well balanced, which at the same time made the contest a matter of the greatest uncertainty.

Nearly the last governor, or patron of the dispensary, upon whom they called, was old Mr. Ledbury—a visit which to Jack was almost painful. Titus was not at home, or he would have come out to see his friend; so Johnson sat alone in the gig at the door, lost in his reflections, some of which were anything but consolatory.

He had not been in the neighbourhood since the night upon which Mr. Ledbury had requested him to discontinue his visits, and would not willingly have done so now, had it been left to his own choice.

He looked up towards the window of Emma's room, and called to mind his bitterness of spirit the last time he gazed at it, whilst he walked backwards and forwards so long in the cold street, watching the light until it was extinguished—when the darkness fell with a double sense of dreariness upon his heart, as it appeared to break the only link that then existed between them. And then he recollected how wretched his home appeared that night—how miserably the long cheerless hours wore away, as their monotonous chimes sounded one after the other, with sluggish indifference to his sorrows, which even found no comfort in the anticipation of future and brighter times—how he welcomed the first dull breaking of the morning twilight, although its gleam merely came as the herald of another day of trouble—and how he greeted the first sound of traffic in the street as a break to his feeling of utter loneliness. For the thousand events of the day, even the most unimportant, will divert our thoughts, however occupied, into other channels, although perhaps only for the passing minute; but there is no relief to that long, depressing wakefulness of night, which throws the shade of its own obscurity around our imaginations, forcing us to look at every hope and prospect through its dispiriting and gloomy medium.

Titus had somewhat prepared the way for Mr. Rawkins, and, after a little conversation, the old gentleman promised him his vote; whereupon that celebrated practitioner once more took his place in the gig with a buoyant and elastic step, and they drove off, to Jack's infinite delight. For the Grimleys had been at the window the whole time, lost in speculation as to the cause of his visit, and thinking it so very strange that Mr. Johnson did not go into the house, considering his intimacy. Mrs. Hoddle, with her local omniscience, might possibly have solved the problem; but the old lady had gone upon a visit a little way into the country a few days previously. Miss Grimley had assisted to pack her up, and direct her properly, Mrs. Hoddle wearing her favourite calash, which in colour resembled summer cabbage on the outside, and pickled ditto in the interior; and now

went in every day to see that the servant did not entertain a class of acquaintance whom the old lady designated generally as the "fellows," in her absence, and at the same time paid every attention to the cats and canaries which their social position in the household demanded.

But while Mr. Rawkins was thus carrying on an active canvass, his opponent, Mr. Koops, was also indefatigable. The appointment was to both of them an object of equal moment, for they were both equally in debt—Rawkins from indolence, and Koops because he had literally nothing to do; and they each looked forward to the first year's salary as something to stop the more clamorous creditors. Hence Mr. Koops rushed into a reckless expenditure in prosecuting his canvass that no other occasion would have justified. More than once he purchased the smallest legs of mutton Mrs. Koops could pick out in all Clerkenwell, and wrapping frizzled paper round the ends, sent them to doubtful voters, as "part of a small present he had just received from Wales of Llangollen mutton;" and every day for a week the servant had orders to put on her best cap, and dance the babies at the window for half an hour together, with the sleeve above their vaccinated arm, tied up with blue ribbon, and turned towards the populace, that they might learn Mr. Koops had a family, and was, moreover, experienced in the treatment of children. And during this display Mrs. Koops remained out of sight, cooking for the first floor; and working out problems with coals in the kitchen fire-place, as to the largest quantity of superficial caloric to be obtained from the smallest possible consumption of material.

At length the important day arrived, and the two streets containing the residences of the candidates were in a tumult of excitement. Mr. Rawkins distributed beer to whoever chose to apply, at the "retail establishment" he was accustomed to patronise; and was, consequently, cheered vehemently by the little boys who followed him wherever he went; and Mr. Koops purchased a new red-check table-cover, and threw open the window of his front parlour, through which could be seen a lavish profusion of mixed biscuits, the walnuts predominating, upon deep green dessert-plates, and decanters of sparkling Marsala, at sixteen shillings per dozen, for the refectation of the voters.

Jack Johnson and Prodgers, who entered fully into the excitement, and were ready for anything, invited Mr. Ledbury, Mr. Tweak, Mr. Simmons, and various other friends, to spend the day; and having made Bob drink success to Mr. Rawkins so many times that his brains began to turn about all ways at once, they forced him to dance "Jim along, Josey," on the top of the rabbit-hutch, and slap his knees in accompaniment, until he fell down from sheer fatigue. And when he had recovered, having routed out the gladiatorial white helmet and shield which Mr. Rawkins was accustomed to use in his personification of the ancient statues, they invested Bob with them, and made him parade in front of the house, bearing the herculean club, and covered with election cards, which they sewed all over him with anatomical needles and ligature silk, requesting the ruling powers of the Dispensary to "Vote for Rawkins, the real friend of the poor."

And when by these means a multitude had been collected, Mr. Prodgers, convinced that the governor was safely bottled at the Dispensary until the conclusion of the ballot, addressed the assemblage from the first-floor window, concluding by drinking their jolly good health, and much good might it do them. And every quarter of an hour they hung imaginary states of the poll from the window, chalked upon the back of a tea-board; in which, although the Dispensary did not number above two hundred subscribers, Mr. Rawkins was many thousand votes ahead of his opponent.

Nor at the Dispensary itself was the scene less exciting. Situated at the end of a court, it was accustomed to receive few visitors except the patients; but to-day there was such an influx of ladies and gentlemen, that every window looking into the alley was crowded with occupants; and the board-room—very properly so named from its appearance—presented an assemblage of the rank and fashion of Clerkenwell seldom before witnessed. Mr. Rawkins and Mr. Koops were both dressed *en grande tenue*, and they publicly shook hands with each other, and hoped they should be friends, whichever way the contest might terminate, and complimented each other upon the high and honourable feeling which pervaded the entire proceedings, in a manner delightful to witness. And then they separated, to pay their respects to their various friends, Mr. Rawkins quietly putting down Koops as the most contemptible, fawning humbug he had ever met with; and Mr. Koops looking upon Rawkins as the lowest specimen of the profession it had ever been his lot to be in any manner associated with.

At last the ballot concluded. The vases were emptied on the table, and the votes carefully counted, amidst the unutterable suspense of the candidates. The last paper was at length reckoned; there was a moment of breathless anxiety; and then the secretary announced to the gasping multitude that by a majority of nine the election had fallen upon Mr. Koops! Among all the studies from the antique which Mr. Rawkins had been in the habit of embodying, including even his favourite one of "Ajax defying the lightning," he never presented so terrific a *tableau* of the passions as at this instant. He had been so perpetually taking wine with everybody all day long, ever since breakfast, that his excitement had arrived at its highest pitch; and having simmered with rage for a minute or two, he at last fairly boiled over. Giving the table a bang with his fist, that made the inkstand jump six inches into the air, and upset as it descended, he rose from his seat, and thus addressed the chairman:—

"Mr. Kingcoins, ladies and gentlemen—ha! ha!—who have favoured me with your votes, and persons of inferior life, who have supported Mr. Koops. I suppose you think you will now get the poor properly attended? I wish you may, and no mistake. You have done a great wrong in electing that untried man. Yes—you, sir—Mr. Koops—it is to you I now allude, of No. 24, Merton Place, surgeon and accoucheur, with an unfurnished second-floor to let. I have lost the election, sir; but my very loss has been a triumph; for a scrutiny—yes, sir, a SCRUTINY!—shall prove the contemptible trickery you

have resorted to. I—you—I mean to say that—sir—I would wring your ignorant neck as I would a pigeon's before you should attend a guinea-pig of mine!"

"Order! order!" from the chairman, and great sensation amongst the company.

"You may knock that hammer upon the table, Mr. Kingcoins, and cry 'Order' as long as you please," continued Mr. Rawkins; "but I shall speak my mind, and I will wring ALL your necks if you interrupt me. The majority of you are shuffling humbugs! I repeat the expression, and will abide by the consequences—shuffling humbugs! But the day will come when you will find out your error, and no mistake, again. Yar! I spurn you!"

And with a last look of mingled rage and withering contempt at the whole meeting, he commended the profession, the Dispensary, Mr. Koops, and the whole universe, collectively and individually, to the care of a person who is never mentioned in refined society but under the mask of some facetious *sobriquet*, and strode out of the room, kicking an indefinite number of boys in various directions as he hurried up the court, leaving the board aghast with astonishment at his extraordinary address and excited manner. On arriving at home, he announced his intention to Prodgers and Johnson of forthwith breaking up his establishment and turning his attentions towards the landlady at the corner; for the defeat had totally disgusted him with medicine, and all that pertained unto it.

There was rejoicing that evening in the halls of Koops. The lodger gave up the drawing-room for the guests to revel in, and the servant never went to bed, but washed plates and glasses continually until a morning sunbeam, that had lost its way, fell down the are. It required much brandy-and-water, and more consolations on the part of the landlady at the corner, to soothe the troubled spirit of Mr. Rawkins; but at last this was accomplished. Mr. Prodgers, who was going up to the hall in a very short time, looked upon the whole affair as an immense lark; and, Bob, who perceived his labours would be somewhat diminished, retired to the knife-shed, and favoured his old friend the leech in the pickle-bottle with a comic song, standing upon his head for very joy. But Jack Johnson perceived, to his deep regret, that by the secession of Mr. Rawkins from the surgical profession he was once more cast upon the world, and all his present hopes of advancement completely knocked upon the head.

CHAPTER XLI.

MR. LEDBURY ACCOMPANIES "THE TOURNIQUETS" TO THE RACES.

TAKING advantage of the first opportunity that offered, Mr. Ledbury called upon Jack, to tell him all about his *rencontre* with Aimée, and its tantalising termination. Johnson was much surprised to hear that his old sweetheart was in England; but, to the astonishment of his simple-hearted friend, did not break out into any great expressions of joy at the intelligence. On the contrary, he appeared little pleased at it. For it may be imagined that since he had known Emma Ledbury, he had thought very little about Aimée—if ever he thought particularly about her at all—and as he did not see any creditable advantage that might result from renewing his acquaintance with the *grisette*, more especially in her present position, he gave full permission to Titus to pay her what attentions he pleased, in the event of their again meeting.

They were talking over matters and prospects on the day subsequent to the dispensary election, when Mr. Prodgers came in from lecture—as he usually termed all species of amusement—and immediately unfolded a plan, in the carrying out of which he requested the co-operation of the other two. The club of medical young gentlemen who called themselves "The Tourniquets," and met once a week in Grafton Street for harmonious outpourings, had been endeavouring to get together a sufficient number of their companions that a van might be chartered to take them to Ascot, and Prodgers had named Mr. Ledbury and Jack Johnson as likely to be of the party. Titus immediately expressed his willingness to join them; but Jack was not so easily persuaded. And yet it was not like him, in general, to give up any sort of amusement; but the events of the last day or two had made him more than usually thoughtful. However, Mr. Ledbury, in his kindness of spirit, hinted that there might be a chance of seeing Emma on the course, and this at once decided the question; whilst the secession of Mr. Rawkins from practice allowed his two talented assistants to be out together without putting the head of the establishment to any particular inconvenience.

As soon as they had agreed upon going, Mr. Prodgers commenced the necessary arrangements, in which Jack, with his usual good-nature, assisted him to the full; and, like every amusement he engaged in, although he was occasionally some time making up his mind whether he ought to indulge in it or not, yet, this point once cleared, his flow of spirits always resumed their usual force. And so, by the united efforts of his fellow-labourer and himself, having plunged into various remote regions over the water, and surrounding the Victoria Theatre, in search of vans and horses, the price was at length fixed, the party collected, and the trip determined upon.

As the grand stand at Ascot is distant some three or four miles

over a score from Hyde Park Corner—as one pair of horses was to perform the journey there and back—and as the numbers to be conveyed in the van were not intended to pay the least courtesy to any particular licences or Act of Parliament—it was suggested that they should start particularly early in the morning, and stopping to breakfast on the road, allow the horses to bait and recruit their strength at the same time. The proprietor of the eating-house in Grafton Street, upon whose first floor “The Tourniquets” were accustomed to hold their weekly meetings, was appointed purveyor of everything to eat and drink in general to the expedition, with orders upon the morning of the day to be stirring with the lark, in order to supply the necessary auxiliaries to another. And the whole of the party being male acquainted with the expenses, the order of going, and the hour of rendezvous, went to bed on the Wednesday night at an earlier hour than could be called to mind in the memory of the most aged keeper of lodgings who existed in the neighbourhood of the London University and subsisted upon the students thereof.

A fine summer morning in London is truly delicious. We do not mean that advanced stage of the day’s journey usually defined as such by average metropolitan life, when traffic and industry are stretching their arms after their repose, and the tide of preparation for the diurnal labour is beginning to flow, but the hour which accompanies sunrise: provided always that it be not witnessed with blinking eyes and jaded disposition, on returning from an evening party; for then the daylight comes to upbraid us, and we shrink from its silent reproach. There is a delightful elasticity in the atmosphere, as yet unapproached by the smoke and noisome vapours inevitable in a great city. The perspective and outlines of the streets and houses stand out clear and sharp, and the spires of the churches elevate their well-defined tracery in the blue morning air. The caged birds, too, at the windows of the different houses—the poorer the neighbourhood the fuller the concert—despite their imprisonment, are answering one another merrily from corner to corner; even the plebeian sparrows strut about and chirp as if, for the time, they felt that they were lords of the locality; and around the parks and squares there is a fresh and grateful odour from the foliage, that alone is worth getting up early to drink into the lungs.

The clock of the Middlesex Hospital struck four, giving the hint to its neighbour on Percy Chapel that it was time it did the same—a warning obeyed some few minutes afterwards—as Mr. Prodgers, accompanied by Titus and Jack Johnson, arrived at the trysting-place in Grafton Street. The van was already there, and the proprietor of the eating-house had taken down his shutters, so that our friends took a slight snack of cold bread and meat, with the smallest possible quantity of singularly mild ale, to lay a trifling foundation for the day’s exertions, having refused various invitations to *al fresco* public breakfasts on their way hither.

The rest of the party, which included Mr. Tweak, Mr. Simmons, and ten or a dozen other embryo practitioners, were not long in joining them; and, whilst the arrangements were being made for stowing

away the provisions under the seats of the van, the time was beguiled by interchanging sallies of playful insinuations with such policemen as chanced to be within hail.

Mr. Ledbury, who was ever anxious to be in the mode, had mounted one of the celebrated sporting wrappers, at twelve and ninepence, of which he had read so much in the fashionable newspapers, and which common every-day people would have called a brown Holland blouse, if they had not been privately informed of the proper name by considerate friends; and under this he had a brown cut-away coat, with conservative buttons, two of which, detached from the rest, but Siamesed together with a bit of shoe-string, fastened it across his chest at one point only, after the manner of men about Regent Street. Besides this, he had a blue spotted handkerchief round his neck, white trousers, and new Albert boots, of resplendent varnish and undeniable toes; so that altogether he might be considered rather the thing than otherwise, and decidedly up to a move or two—at least, judging from his costume. The toilets of the other gentlemen were not particularly *soignées*, but still sufficiently appropriate to throw no discredit upon the expedition.

All the preparations being concluded, they entered the van, and commenced the journey. As long as they remained in the streets of London they confined their jocularities to themselves, occasionally offering some facetious salutation to an early artificer who chanced to pass; but it was not until they had left Hyde Park Corner behind them that their mirth got into full play, as soon as a little temporary inconvenience had subsided attendant upon everyone wishing to drive.

Eventually Jack and Ledbury crept through the front curtain, and got upon the box, by the side of the coachman, who was a slight wag in his way, leaving Mr. Prodgers to divert the rest within, which he did by leading the verses of an apparently endless song, and to which the others added a chorus of equal duration.

“You’ll have a noisy party to-day, I’m thinking,” observed Jack as the melody burst upon his ear.

“Lord bless you! that’s nothink,” returned the man. “The Monday Hampton-Courters, they’re the ones for racketing.”

“What, the visitors?” asked Ledbury.

“Yes—them as goes for tea and pictures. They do sit in the sun when they gets down there uncommon, to be sure!”

Mr. Ledbury, not exacting comprehending this idiomatic reply, not clearly seeing why the visitors should select such a situation to sit in when there was plenty of shade, ventured to demand an explanation.

“Why, you see,” replied the driver, “the greater part of ’em is teetotallers, and so, in course, they finishes by being all mops and brooms. Their heads can’t stand it—it’s wonderful how moist sugar upsets them.—How about that nose-bag, Pluckey?”

The last sentence was thrown off at a tangent towards an ostler standing before a public-house at Knightsbridge, and was supposed to have reference to some transaction of a former period, with which they were both acquainted. Indeed, the driver seemed on terms of the

most familiar intimacy with everybody who was stirring along the road.

Formal, steady-going Kensington with its grave rows of houses, and graver inmates, its clerk retiring ovals, and petty-gentility squares—less refined Hammersmith, and academical Turnham Green, were successively traversed; and when the van had rattled through the long straggling streets of dirty Brentford, and cleared the canal, the party began to feel that they were getting into the country, delivering themselves up accordingly to the *abandon* of rural life. Not caring to hurry the horses, as they had plenty of time before them, they got out of the van and ran by the side, giving way to all sorts of pleasantries, and exhibiting endless feats of gymnastics upon every gate, rail, or edge-bank they passed, until they arrived at the entrance of Hounslow.

The tradesmen here were beginning to open their shops, and all the inn-yards bore tokens of preparation for the approaching business of the race-day, being filled with grooms, post-boys, and horses. There are legends extant going to prove that in the olden time, when railways were not, coaches and chariots were accustomed to pass through Hounslow many times in the day; and these derived some confirmation from the apparitions of various aged and decrepit post-chaises, drawn out before the doors, to whose dusty and mouldy forms water and blacking had united to give a temporary renovation, and fit them in some measure for the uses of the day. But beyond the town all was again quiet.

It was a fine, clear morning, and there was a light vapour floating about the distant hills that betokened the approach of a hot noon, whilst the hedges and turf at the side of the footpath were sparkling in the bright June sunshine; for the day's influx of travellers had not yet begun to powder them with dust until they were all reduced to one uniform brown. Excited by the country air and the anticipation of the holiday, Mr. Prodgers was exceedingly great. He sang the entire contents of a sixpenny song-book, from beginning to end, composing extempore airs when he did not know the proper ones; played the thimble-rig upon the top of his hat with a pepper-corn and three brass thimbles, purchased for a penny in Gower Place, and explained the mysteries of that sport and pastime so popular amongst the fools of the nineteenth century; irritated the turnpikeman at Bedfont Gate, by wishing to know whether he would like the money then, or wait until he got it, inquiring the average number of wheelbarrows that went through in the course of a week, and if he charged for watches according to the number of wheels they went on; whether donkeys paid toll, and if so, whether he, the pikeman, did not fight very shy of going through the gate: together with many other pleasantries, poured out with a volubility most remarkable, which everybody is perfectly at liberty to indulge in with respect to turnpike-keepers at any time, but more especially during the races.

They had decided upon stopping at Staines to breakfast, and giving the horses an hour's rest; whereupon, as they were approaching

that town, Jack Johnson, who was evidently keeping himself in reserve for the day's fun, proposed that, to enter with becoming importance, Mr. Ledbury should be requested to ride postillion. There was only one vote against this measure, and that was the driver's; but upon being asked publicly whether he would prefer whatever he liked to order when they stopped, or the choice of trial by battle to prove his right of command with the whole party whilst they were going on, he immediately assented to the proposition. Titus was not, as we know, a first-rate equestrian; but they managed to elevate him upon one of the horses, steadying himself with his off-foot upon the pole; and then Mr. Prodgers gave him an old bugle, which had been hitherto concealed under the seat, with instructions to sound it perpetually as they went through the town; so that upon the whole, he looked exceedingly chivalric and imposing, and was delighted with being thus distinguished, albeit the buckles of the harness were occasionally productive of inconvenience.

There are certainly places in Great Britain more frivolous and dissipated than Staines. The trivial occupations of slight minds, evening parties, dramatic representations, public entertainments, and the like, are not there in vogue, but orderly *réunions*, select meetings, and placid society are in the ascendant. It always tempts lively visitors to reflect upon what a place it might be if it were not what it is. There are noble inns, but few travellers; there is a fine bridge, but few things to go over it; a capacious institution, but few lecturers, or rather, a fair complement of lecturers, but few auditors; a goodly river, but few boats; capabilities for all kinds of amusements, dispositions for none. As such, the novel *entrée* of the van containing our friends created no small astonishment, although they were looking forward to the usual turmoil of race company. But the more they appeared amazed, the louder Mr. Ledbury blew his horn, and the more vehemently his friends within sang "Rule Britannia." Indeed, it was only by literal compulsion that Mr. Prodgers could be restrained from climbing to the roof of the van and thereon performing a dance, supposed by the frequenters of fairs to be peculiar to the North American Indians. But when it was palpably shown that he would inevitably conclude by breaking through, and descending to the level of the rest, he abandoned the idea, and contented himself with haranguing the little boys who ran behind and cheered the *cortège*—sometimes hooking off their caps with his stick, and causing the owners to run much farther than they intended.

At length they stopped to breakfast, which consisted chiefly of stout and skittles, at a roadside inn on Egham Causeway. Whilst they were thus occupied, a tramp-cart, containing sticks and snuff-boxes for the idlers behind the booths, with a small three-legged table slung up behind it, stopped at the door, and a man descended. Hearing the noise of the party, he advanced towards them, and made a slight reverence to Jack, who immediately recognised his old friend of the St. Giles's cellar, the Professor of Misery for the Million.

"Hallo!" cried Johnson, as the man saluted him. "Who would have thought of seeing you here?"

"Always comes to Ascot," replied the professor, touching his hat. "That 'ere cart's chuck full of dodges for the races. I shall be very happy to drink luck to your honour while we're a-haunting."

"Oh! certainly," answered Jack; "call for what you like. What have you got moving inside the cart there?" he continued, as the tilt was agitated by the restless motions of someone inside.

"That's the infant Garrick," replied the man, "who acts Richard. I reckon he wants his breakfast."

Upon Jack's expressing a wish to see the Roscius, the professor lifted out a diminutive creature from the cart, bearing some resemblance to a monkey, in a costume of the middle ages, of Richardson's show. The small performer, imagining he was called upon to exhibit his histrionic powers, immediately struck an attitude, and began to enact what he termed the quarrel scene between Romeo and Julius Cæsar; but upon receiving the intelligence that he was taken out for refreshment, he immediately desisted.

"You see, he should act the play, sir," said the professor, in an apologetical tone, "only I don't know the rest of the patter. His governor's got a book, though, as tells you all about it."

"And where is his governor?" asked Jack.

"Coming after us, sir, along with Jerry, and Follow the Drum, and Tilly-ung-de-rung; the doll-trick and the dulcimer has got a cast on ahead."

"And what are you going to do yourself?" asked Jack, not exactly comprehending, with all his experience, who were the individuals designated by these various names.

"Well, sir, now I'll tell you," said the man, mysteriously. "My pardner's got a dimunt, star, and hanker-table, and I'm going to play with him when nobody else does, part of the day; and when I've done there I'm going round amongst the carriages with little Tommy. Here he is, sir."

And, thus speaking, the man drew a battered little wooden figure of a sailor from his pocket, with whom he commenced a ventriloquial conversation in his coat-tails and underground, only cut short by the driver of the van coming to tell Johnson that he thought it was time to start again. Accordingly, the party were collected together, and with the promise of seeing the professor and his various talented friends in full force upon the course, they once more set off; not wishing to get situated in the fifth rank, half a mile below the distance-post.

They had been so long at breakfast that the road was all bustle and excitement when they left the inn. All sorts of vehicles were in motion, from the dashing landau and four, or the private bang-up, to the light cart with the covered top, so poetically named a "flying bedstead," licensed to carry no end, or the donkey dragging a small painted waggon, filled with ginger-beer at a penny a bottle; broad-wheeled and tilted waggons, filled with regular holiday-makers, bread, cheese, and pewter cans; post-chaises, with three fat people inside, putting their arms out at the windows, with a fourth on the bar, and two retail dealers in flabby tarts and cow-pies, upon the spikes

behind; pedestrians strapping along with stout sticks and bundles at the rate of five miles an hour; and coaches, omnibuses, four-wheeled chaises, gigs, cabs, go-carts, flies, shattergodans—in short, things upon wheels of every description, all driving on, pell-mell, through the long principal street of Egham, half-hidden by the clouds of dust which their predecessors were creating.

Mr. Ledbury was all excitement, and blew his horn so deliriously that he was at last restrained from splitting the ears of his companion by sheer force.

“This is glorious, Jack!” he said to his friend, rubbing his hands with sheer delight. “Egham races will be in two months from this. I vote we all go there too.”

Jack made some acquiescing reply. But prescience is not allowed as an attribute of mortality. That day two months’ both Ledbury and Johnson were hundreds of miles away from England.

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CHAPTER XLII.

WHAT BEFEL MR. LEDBURY AND JACK UPON ASCOT RACE-COURSE.

THE names of Henry the Fifth and Wellington are not, respectively, more intimately connected with the fields of Agincourt and Waterloo than are those of certain provincial typographers with the various heaths, downs, hursts, or meads upon which the races are held. It would not appear like Epsom unless the name of Dorling rang in our ears the whole way thither; it is absolutely necessary to the true enjoyment of Ascot and Egham that we should be continually reminded there are such enlightened printers as Oxley and Weston still in existence; and if any vendor of cards at Hampton dared to insinuate that others than Lindsey had furnished the lists of the horses, we should counsel his instant annihilation on the spot. There were plenty of these retail pasteboard merchants already on the road: and one of them—a gentleman without shoes, who had adorned his head with a red cotton handkerchief tied tightly over it, now thrust a card, that was wedged into a split stick, right into Mr. Ledbury’s face, exclaiming—

“Oxley’s c’rect list, my noble sportsman!”

“I am not deceived, then,” thought Titus; “he takes me not only for a sportsman, but a noble one.”

Whereupon Mr. Ledbury assumed a knowing air; and invested sixpence in the purchase of a card, from which he commenced studying the latest state of the odds with singular attention.

“Hallo! let me see the list,” cried Mr. Prodgers, who, to the great horror of Titus, was stamping up the hill in his shirt-sleeves, with his coat hung upon a stick over his shoulder. “Why, this is one of yesterday’s!”

“Bless me!” said Mr. Ledbury; “impossible.”

“But very true,” returned Prodgers. “Look here—Wednesday; to-day is Thursday, you know!”

“The man must have made a mistake,” said Titus, turning round to upbraid him.

But the vendor was already at the bottom of the hill, attacking a four-in-hand.

“Never mind, Leddy,” exclaimed Johnson, coming up to their side; “the colours of the riders will be just the same to-day as they were yesterday, and you can fancy the horses are the same too. It will do quite as well.”

“Perhaps Mr. Ledbury, as a noble sportsman, did not exactly see this; for the transaction had somewhat wounded his dignity. However, when the van stopped at the top of the hill, and they resumed their places, all his good humour returned with his Derby Zephyr, which he once more put on to keep off the dust; and, knowing that the aristocracy were not in the habit of going to races in long vans, he did not care to be taken for one of them any longer, but became as hilarious and benevolent as heretofore.

The throng of pedestrians and vehicles increased, and at the “Wheatshed” at Virginia Water there was a perfect mob of carriages, many of whose intended occupants were at breakfast in the best parlour, with such intente appetites that they took no notice of the courteous salute with which Mr. Prodgers greeted them upon the horn as they passed. So he turned his abilities from the instrumental to the vocal line, and, reproducing his song-book, volunteered an entertainment, which he called “Half-an-hour in the middle of the day with Fairburn,” and which, with *encores*, choruses, and incidental interruptions, lasted until they had passed the turnpike at Blacknest—a pretty village, embosomed in trees, at the foot of one of the forest hills—and arrived at Sunninghill Wells: this establishment bearing witness to a singular geological phenomenon, equally curious with landslips and the progression of glaciers; for there is an ancient board affixed to the premises, stating that they are “one quarter of a mile from the course,” which those skilled in distances affirm goes to prove that some internal convulsion of nature has either moved the course, grand stand, posts, and all, a great deal farther off than it used to be, or that Sunninghill Wells have altered their position by a gradual, yet imperceptible, shifting of the earth, which may, in all probability, finally leave them at Bagshot. We furnish the hint for the benefit of any gentleman anxious to read some exciting paper to the Geological Society, since we believe that learned body have not yet turned their attention to it.

“Here you are, sir,” bawled a man who rushed from an ambush at the side of the road, and clung to the head-bits of the horses drawing the van, in a most violent paroxysm of desperate agony.

“Look there—the ‘Great St. Leger Stables!’ I know’d you’d go along of me.”

Mr. Ledbury’s first idea had impinged upon brigands; but he now perceived that the man was a horse-keeper, as he looked at the “Great St. Leger Stables,” which were simply constructed of turf and clothes-props, and roofed with heath and hurdles.

“Now, you’ll just leave them horses alone,” cried the driver, as he witnessed the attack, holding up his whip in an attitude of infliction.

“Don’t you hear him say you’re to leave ’em alone?” cried another touter, in a white linen surcoat, pulling the heads of the animals in a contrary direction with equal energy. “This is the way, noble captains,” he continued. “No mouldy oats here—all the regular cocktail corn, and no mistake!”

“Who bought the burnt hay at Oaking?” ejaculated a third stable-man, separating the other two by dint of great exertion, and getting right in front of the pole. And by this time every available strap and buckle of the harness had been seized by the touters, at which they tugged and pulled with such unflinching vigour that the horses became quite secondary affairs in the progression of the van.

“Now we’ve got our own corn, and ain’t going to put up nowhere—leastways, not with any of you,” said the driver.

Whether this intimation alone would have been sufficient to get rid of the stable-keepers is a matter of doubt had not a private coach come up, and drawn them all away in an instant, except one more frantic than the rest, who remained until he was whipped away, expressing his opinion that the van and its occupants was only a cockney hutch of tailors, he know’d, from the beginning.

This preliminary danger being passed, after much jostling and entanglement, coupled with the playful vagaries of jibbing horses, who impaled the back panels of their carriages upon the poles of those behind, for which those behind were directly abused in the most unmeasured terms—after a great deal of whipping, and lashing, and swearing, and running up banks on one side, and sinking deep into ruts of sand upon the other, the van arrived at a comparatively clear spot beyond the Swinley corner at the end of the course. Here they determined to stop, in preference to being in the tenth rank a quarter of a mile below the distance post, which was the only place that there now appeared a chance of getting to. Upon coming to this decision, the horses were taken out and fastened to the side of the vehicle, whilst the party slightly refreshed themselves from the hampers, which being, in common with other race-course hampers, always too tall for the seats they are meant to go under, were soon opened and investigated.

This proceeding over, Johnson, who was all impatience to look after the Wilmers, proposed that they should go upon the course, adding it was not necessary that they should be tied to one another, so long as they found their way back to the van after the last race. And having been stopped by two highwaymen armed with clothes-brushes, who angrily insisted upon removing every atom of dust from

their hats and coats, they were at last permitted to go whichever way they chose—Ledbury and his friend selecting the first opportunity to slip quietly away from the others, who, under the guidance of Mr. Prodgers, plunged into the regions of the dancing-tents and gambling-booths outside the ropes.

"There they are!" suddenly ejaculated Mr. Ledbury, who had been investigating the rows of carriages with great care as they passed down the course. "There's Fanny Wilmer's bonnet, and I can see Miss Seymour and Em. Hurrah, Jack! come along."

But Johnson needed no persuasion; and, after a delay of two seconds, consequent upon his anxiety in trying to get over the ropes, whilst Titus erept under them, and then each of them courteously changing their method at the same instant to accommodate the other, and producing the same confusion, they cleared the intervening promenade, and were close to the Wilmers' carriage.

They were all there—old Mr. Wilmer upon the box, with Miss Seymour, and Mr. John Wilmer standing upon the wheel at her side, and talking to her a great deal more than Mr. Ledbury saw the necessity for. Mrs. Wilmer, too, and her daughter, were conversing with some friends who had just come up; and opposite to them was Emma Ledbury—the *belle* of the party, after all—looking as pretty and animated as ever, and little thinking who was so near her, or she would not have coloured so deeply and so suddenly when she found out. But when Johnson, having been hurriedly introduced to the rest of the party, turned towards Emma, and their trembling hands met, although, to casual observers, it was only a common greeting of acquaintanceship, yet there was a magnetic sympathy in that quivering pressure which silently conveyed to each of them, far better than words could have done, and as plainly as their fingers could express ideas, that although it was some time since they had met, yet their sentiments were still the same towards each other—that they would continue to be so—and that there were no other hands in the world whose touch could give such thrilling happiness. Johnson had never told Emma in plain literal words that he loved her, nor had she, in return, given him to understand, *viva voce*, that his addresses were acceptable; but they both knew these things very well. It is not the deaf and dumb people alone who can talk with their fingers.

One of those popular delusions, supposed to be a trial of natural speed between different horses, termed a race, now took place; and when this was over, and the ladies had been assisted down from the carriage seats, upon which they had stood during the struggle, Mr. Wilmer proposed a walk upon the course. Johnson directly offered his arm to Emma Ledbury, and Mr. Wilmer, who did not see any great excitement in playing cavalier to his sister, took Miss Seymour under his care; so that Mr. Ledbury was obliged to accompany Fanny Wilmer, who was a very nice girl in her way, but not the one Titus wished to walk with. Mrs. Wilmer also followed with a friend, and the old gentleman was left with a bottle of sherry to take care of the carriage, and telegraph to any acquaintances he saw upon the course how happy he should be to

have a glass of wine with them—which signal he expressed by holding up the bottle, and winking his eye.

After a little pretty confusion in crossing the ropes, the whole party got upon the course, which was now covered with company, mountebanks, thimble-rigs, and Punch's shows. The immortal Jerry was there in an old Windsor uniform and cocked hat, regretting he could not dine with various individuals, on account of a prior engagement at the Castle; and also the man in the red coat, with his travelling doll and mysterious pack of cards. The infant Garrick, too, had come out in great force, accompanied by his tutor, who carried the crown, tunic, and sword necessary for his change from Hamlet to Richard the Third. But the humours of the race-course have been described so often and so well that the subject is now as devoid of freshness as Ascot Heath itself after a month of hot dry weather.

There were so many people that it was no wonder Johnson and Emma soon lost sight of their party; for they were both deeply engaged in a very interesting conversation, which lasted so long that they had wandered a considerable distance from the carriage down the course. And, although bells had rung at different intervals, and horses had pranced about the course, and people had run half across, and been put back again by policemen, they still kept walking on, until an outrider somewhat startled them by riding up and begging they would go outside the ropes, as another race was about to commence. Whereupon, as they were at least a quarter of a mile from their friends' situation, they hastened to get what places they could, merely until the race was over, when they could rejoin the Wilmers.

"Let the poor gipsy-woman tell your fortune, my pretty gentleman," said a handsome, dark-eyed girl, who approached them.

"It is not worth knowing," said Jack, in a half-melancholy tone. "I am afraid it is settled."

"Let me cross the pretty lady's hand with a piece of silver," continued the gitana, glancing at his fair companion.

"I have no change, my good woman," said Emma.

"Perhaps the gentleman can find a small sixpence," resumed the gipsy; "and perhaps some day you will keep his money for him, my pretty lady."

"There—go along!" said Johnson, smiling as he gave the woman the sixpence, and pressing Emma's arm somewhat closely within his own.

"You are born to great fortune, my pretty lady," observed the gipsy, "and one that loves you is not far off, who is to share it with you. He has told you so a great many times to-day, and you were very happy to hear it. Is it not true what the poor gipsy-woman tells you, sweet gentleman?"

"Do you think it is true?" said Johnson, in a low voice to Emma, as the woman, seeing she was close to a carriage full of ladies, hurried off to arrive before another prophetess who was approaching.

But Emma returned no answer; her parasol had never before been so very difficult to open as it was just at that instant.

“Do say if it is true,” continued Johnson in the same tone; “and then I will tell you something in return, Emma—I may call you Emma, may I not?”

“I cannot help what you choose to call me,” replied the pretty girl, in a tremble of mingled agitation and happiness. “What were you going to tell me?”

“That I love you dearly; that all I have gone through lately has been for your sake alone; and that I have been conceited enough to think you also felt some little interest in my welfare. Was I right in so doing?”

Poor Emma! she ought not to have been astonished at hearing what she knew so very well before, and yet her surprise prevented her from returning any answer. But she looked round towards Johnson, leaving the refractory parasol entirely to fate, and then he saw that her eyes were glistening with tears.

“Do not be angry with me, Emma, for saying what I have done,” continued Jack, gaining fresh confidence with every word, now that the Rubicon was passed. “I know I ought not to have mentioned this subject; perhaps more especially at the present time, when my prospects appear more uncertain than ever. But that was the reason which partly drove me to speak. You are not displeased with me? May I hope that you will not altogether look upon me as a mere friend?”

Still Emma made no reply; but as Johnson took her hand in his own, the slightest pressure in the world assured him that his suit was not discarded, and that his future attempts at establishing himself might be undertaken with greater confidence than ever. The races, the mob of pedestrians by whom they were surrounded, their own friends, were all entirely forgotten for some minutes, for their hearts were too full to think of anything else but themselves; and Jack felt that he would not have exchanged places or possessions with the most envied amongst all the high and wealthy company upon the course that day. Nor was it until Emma gently suggested that their absence might appear strange to the Wilmers that he was recalled from his day-dream to the circumstance of the race being finished, and the company once more assembling on the course.

They had to encounter a little of the usual bantering from their friends when they got back to the carriage; and when Emma was once more restored to her party, Jack took a temporary leave of them and withdrew; as much for the purpose of strolling along the course by himself and collecting his ideas, which for the last twenty minutes had been perfectly bewildered, as to avoid the appearance of paying too much attention to Emma before the Wilmers, who were in charming ignorance of the real circumstances of the case. And feeling happier than he had done for many months, he threaded his way amongst the throng of promenaders towards the upper end of the course, entirely lost in a very intricate labyrinth of pleasant reflections, until a well-known voice called him by his name, and caused him to look towards the point from which it proceeded.

Upon the box-seat of an elegant britska, which was drawn up to the ropes in one of the best situations on the course, was Mr. Ledbury,

in a state of extreme hilarity, holding a tinfoil-capped bottle in one hand and a tall pink glass in the other, from which he was continually taking wine with nobody, and apparently being on terms of the most convivial familiarity with a very stout man in mustachios at his side, whom he occasionally punched in the ribs with the neck of the bottle, or winked at him as he drank his champagne. Two handsome young women, elegantly dressed, were in the carriage, which was surrounded by more stylish-looking men; and upon the opposite seat was spread such a display of lobsters, fowls, raised pies, and tall bottles that people stopped to gaze at the collation, and partake of it in imagination, in company with the throng of beggars, conjurers, fortune-tellers, and pilferers by which the party was surrounded.

“Hallo, Jack!” cried Titus, as his friend approached; “here we are again! How d’ye do? Here’s a lark! Have some champagne—no gooseberry—I’m all right!—ha! ha! ha! jolly!”

Before Jack accepted the proffered libation, he glanced towards the ladies, as in politeness bound, and in hopes that some one would favour him with an introduction. But this was apparently not needed, for the one nearest to him, as she looked round, cried out in accents of agreeable surprise—

“Mon Dieu! mon ami—c’est toi! c’est toi! que je suis contente de te voir encore!”

“Aimée!” exclaimed Johnson, in return, as he recognised his old flame of the Rue St. Jacques. And, before he had recovered from his surprise, the lady leant over the side of the carriage, and, drawing Jack towards her, kissed him on both cheeks, *en plein jour*, to the great horror of two old dowagers in an adjoining chariot, who thought they had got near a very odd lot, and the immense gratification of Mr. Ledbury, who directly drank both their healths in a fresh glass of champagne.

“Jack!” cried Titus, as soon as he recovered his breath, “let me introduce you to Signor Pizzicato—Mr. Johnson—Jack Johnson, you know; you have heard me talk of him.”

“How are you do, Monsieur Shonson?” said the good-tempered signor.

Jack acknowledged the courtesy, and was then presented to the other lady, Mademoiselle Pauline Rosière, also of Her Majesty’s Theatre, and one or two other Italians, as well as the Honourable Floss Pageant, and his faithful follower, the Baron Devoidoff Wits, a distinguished foreigner. These two last appeared to be in reality the owners of the carriage and heads of the party, although nobody seemed to pay them much attention. But the great aim of Pageant’s life was to be considered a “fast man.” And, as he thought the fact of his having brought the present party down to Ascot, as well as having entered a horse for the cup, went a great way towards establishing his claim to that title, he did not care to look any further. Possibly he would not have seen anything if he had, for, in spite of the dictionary of synonyms, there is a great deal of difference between being “fast” and “quick.” The attributes usually exist in an inverse ratio.

Mr. Pageant and his *umbra* now went off to see their horse saddled, leaving the rest of the party to themselves, when Aimée began to laugh, and show her teeth, and talk so fast that there was not much occasion for the others to exert themselves in keeping up the conversation. And perhaps Jack did not feel any great inclination to do so; indeed, his old friend remarked that he had become "*triste comme un vrai Anglais*." In Aimée, however, there was not much difference. Her features were somewhat more delicate, and her cheeks had lost the freshness that eight or ten months back characterised the rosy *grisette*, but she had gained much in manner and *tournure*. It appeared that she had re-entered the Académie shortly after Jack and Ledbury left Paris—the ballet being the *El Dorado* of her class; and had made such rapid progress therein that she was pronounced sufficiently effective to undergo the ordeal of our own Opera audience.

"And how came you to leave the Wilmers, Titus?" asked Jack, as soon as he found an opportunity of speaking.

"Better fun here, Jack," said Mr. Ledbury, adding, moreover, that he was as right as the sum of ninepence is occasionally supposed to be under undefined circumstances. "What amusement was it for me, hopping about after John Wilmer and Miss Seymour? I thought she was going to walk with me. Never mind—have some wine—burrah!"

"I think you are getting on, Titus," observed Jack, smiling at his friend's hilarity.

"This is life, Jack," replied Mr. Ledbury; "the life that I was born to lead—isn't it, Aimée?"

"Je m'appelle Mademoiselle l'Etoile," returned the *danseuse*, with a smile and an expression of mock gravity.

"Three cheers for Mademoiselle l'Etoile!" continued Mr. Ledbury. "I shall call you Aimée—eh?—you recollect.

"Messieurs les étudiants,
Montez à la chaumière."

"Oh! hé! hé—oh! hé! hé!—fi done! pas si fort! point du télégraph!"

And in extreme excitement, Mr. Ledbury stood upon the box of the carriage, and indulged in various anti-garde-municipale dances, whilst Signor Pizzicato emptied a fresh bottle of champagne into a tankard, and handed it to Johnson and the others of the party.

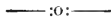
"I shan't go home with The Tourniquets," said Mr. Ledbury; "a van is low, and home is slow. I wish Miss Seymour could see me here."

Had Mr. Ledbury's *chapeau Français* been the cap of Fortunatus, his desire could not have been more speedily gratified; for at this instant all the Wilmer detachment had sauntered once more along the course, and now stood at the ropes, attracted by the noise of the party.

"Hallo!" cried Titus, stopping short in his exertions as he recognised them; "here you all are, then—come along."

"Hush, Ledbury! for goodness' sake, what are you about?" said Jack, earnestly. "I will go to them."

And, crimson with confusion, Jack hurried away from the carriage, to make what excuses he best might to Emma Ledbury for being with such an apparently uproarious company. For special reasons he did not leave her side again until the conclusion of the day's sport, when he returned to the van, and gradually contrived to get the rest of his companions together. All of them were in amazingly good spirits; and, as Johnson was not behind-hand in hilarity, the journey home was perhaps the most amusing part of the excursion; the fun being fast and furious until they were once more put down in Grafton Street, in a state of wonderful preservation, considering all things, at half-an-hour before midnight.



CHAPTER XLIII.

MR. LEDBURY VENTURES ONCE MORE TO THE OPERA FOR SIGNOR PIZZICATO'S CONCERT.

TITUS returned to town with his distinguished friends, as he had expressed his intention of doing. The Honourable Floss and the Baron proceeded to Windsor at the end of the race, so that the inmates of the carriage were comparatively one party, and very merry indeed they were, especially after they had stopped to take tea at the "Wheat-sheaf," and seen the pile of dry rocks, humorously called "the cascade," at Virginia Water. And when they parted, upon arriving in London, which they did with many interchanges of civilities and courteous speeches, Signor Pizzicato hoped Mr. Ledbury would come to his concert the next morning, for which purpose he would leave his name at the stage-door of the Opera. Titus winced a little at the recollection of his late disasters at the same place; but as he discovered that nobody seemed to know much about them, from the conversation of the Signor, he determined to go.

Accordingly, the next day, one hour after noon, Mr. Ledbury presented himself at the door of Her Majesty's Theatre, having paid, as usual, great attention to his toilet, and looking very blithe and sprightly, albeit the champagne of the previous day had induced the consumption of two separate bottles of soda-water that very morning. He was slightly nervous as he walked up to the person who was keeping the desk in the hall, and inquired if his name had been left; nor was his trepidation diminished as he regarded the blunderbusses over the chimney-piece, which he imagined must be kept in readiness for the purpose of shooting all persons trespassing behind the scenes who

had no business there—the spring-guns, as it were, of the Opera preserves, the man-traps being principally found amongst the ballet.

Signor Pizzicato had not forgotten his invitation, and Titus passed on until, after various mistakes, he once more found himself on the stage. And very curious did the house look in the morning. The whole front of the audience part of the theatre was entirely covered in with canvas, which diminished its size to a singular degree, whilst the daylight fell with dreary coldness through the windows above the flies and over the gallery. Men were rolling down heavy drop-scenes from the top, the *coulisses* not being able to afford accommodation to flats in more senses than one; women were at work upon clouds and fountains that were placed about the stage; carpenters were sawing out the borders of some cut forest or statue; and in the midst of it all, one of the ruling powers of the ballet, with a violin in his hand, was giving a lesson to a Terpsichorean divinity in very short petticoats, and a morning promenade-cape over her shoulders, who looked something like the antithetical combinations produced by those dissected cards whereby all sorts of heads and bodies can be made to fit together.

Wending his way amidst a labyrinth of side-scenes on the opposite prompt-side of the house, Mr. Ledbury followed a large fiddle, which he presumed was going to the scene of harmony, and at length got safely to the apartment behind the orchestra in the Opera concert-room. The *camera* (we will call it by an Italian name), which, from its one window at the end, may almost be termed *obscura* as well, appropriated as the green-room to the singers, is an apartment in which plain utility has certainly been considered more than ornament. The walls are adorned with slight extempore cartoons by occasional idlers; the furniture consists of four chairs and some side-scenes, put there to be out of the way; and a general air of simplicity reigns throughout, consistent with all really great enterprises.

But there was a goodly company collected in this unambitious room. First of all was Signor Pizzicato himself, with a programme in his hand, looking very hot, and arranging the order of the *morçeaux*. Then there was the amiable Benedict, with a smile and good-tempered word for everybody, and near him the industrious Salabert, who, in point of long service and undying utility, may be termed the Widdecomb of the Opera, talking to Giovanni Walker, the "librarian in attendance." And the mighty Lablache was making the room shake again with a few random C's and D's, such as Jupiter's thunder would produce under the management of Apollo, now and then stopping to address some lively *badinage* to Grisi or Persiani, whom Titus hardly recognised in their unassuming morning dresses. At the end of the room was seated the pretty Moltini, with our own pale beauty, Albertazzi; and nearer the door our talented country-woman, Mrs. Alfred Shaw, was conversing with her droll and original compatriot, John Parry, who, in spite of his "mamma" being so "very particular," appeared perfectly happy and contented. Besides all these, Fornasari, Mario, and a host of other stars, were standing

about the room, not as Elvinos, Arturos, and the like, but in common every-day frock-coats and trousers, quite pleasant and affable, and very like ordinary gentlemen. And the distinguished foreigner who had played the sky-rocket rondo upon the piano at Mrs. de Robinson's was also there, with his hair in want of the scissors more badly than ever, looking very volcanic, and evidently preparing for some extra-arduous scrimmage over the keys, in which contest he was to be joined by another foreign gentleman in the same line, who was to make his *début* that morning—one of those countless professors of musical sleight-of-hand who rise up during the season as thick as blackberries, and deserve almost as much credit for the long practice required to give them such rapid and certain execution as the other clever individuals who toss up knives and rings at the races, or dance hornpipes amongst eggs.

Mr. Ledbury was greatly amused when he first entered the room, and put himself in several distinguished attitudes, that he might appear perfectly unembarrassed and quite accustomed to excellent society. But after a time, not perfectly understanding the Babel of languages which sounded on every side, he thought he should like to hear a little of what was going on in front, and therefore applied to Signor Pizzicato to put him in the right way of so doing. That good-tempered gentleman immediately introduced Titus to the entrance of a long dark passage, at the end of which, and close to the door leading on to the orchestra, there was a nook, in which, if he stood, he could command a view of both the audience and the singers. And very pretty indeed did the room appear from this position; for, being a morning concert, the bonnets of the ladies, of every shade and tint, gave it the appearance of an elegant *parterre*, as Titus looked down upon them, and almost compensated for the want of excitement and enthusiasm which candle-light and after-dinner gave rise to at evening performances. For the audience at a *matinée* is generally cold and severe, approaching nearer in its character to that of the Ancient Concerts; at which meeting, should a change of fashion ever induce a falling-off of company, we recommend the directors to contract immediately with Madame Tussand for a fresh set in waxwork, who might be made, by the simplest mechanism, to turn over the leaves of their programmes all at once, and who would have the advantage of possessing great powers of endurance, as well as inspiriting the singers quite as much by their solemn attention as the present supporters of those musical exhumations.

Several songs, duets, and instrumental solos took place, to the great gratification of Mr. Ledbury, and then the period arrived for the piano-skirmish between the two foreign gentlemen, which was to be the *cheral de bataille* of the morning. To accomplish this performance it was necessary that another piano should be carried into the orchestra, and Titus therefore left his nook in the passage to make room for some of the music-stands to be brought out before the new grand instrument was placed there. But as the duet appeared to excite much curiosity, and several were waiting round the door to follow the musician to the platform, Mr. Ledbury thought he would slip into his station before the piano instead of going after it. He therefore

walked along the passage before the men who were carrying the body of the instrument, like a chief undertaker, chuckling at his sly tact, until, upon arriving at the niche in the wall, he found, to his great discomfiture, that it was entirely filled up with stools and music-stands. To go back was impossible, for the passage was entirely filled up, and he had no alternative but to be driven onward to the orchestra, upon the platform of which he was now forcibly impelled, by the decree of those malicious fates who appeared to have decided that Mr. Ledbury's appearance at the Opera, under any circumstances, should always be attended by a corresponding appearance, against his will, in public.

A burst of applause greeted him as he advanced, the greater part of the audience taking him for the foreign musical gentleman—which idea his spectacles and turned-up wristbands somewhat justified; nor did this cease until the real *artiste* advanced, and drawing Mr. Ledbury from his place somewhat unceremoniously, made a grand bow, whilst Titus retired to the back in great confusion, where he was compelled to wait throughout the performance, as the door was quite blocked up; but as soon as it had come to an end which at one time appeared very doubtful, he hurried back to the waiting-room, making an inward vow, without mental reservation of any kind, never to set foot within the Opera again; and he kept it.

On his return, Signor Pizzicato began to banter him upon his successful *début*, which, while it convinced Titus that his previous adventure was not known, made him somewhat uneasy, especially when the others joined in the laugh. He therefore went back to the stage of the theatre, where the rehearsal of a ballet was still going on; and was not long in discovering Aimée amongst the *coryphées*. Some of the company who had orchestra seats, overcome by the heat of the room, were leaving the concert at this moment, and attracted by the novel sight, loitered a few minutes at the wings to watch the dancers. Aimée, who had just finished a *pas*, soon perceived Titus at the side-scene, and bounding towards him, to inquire how he was after the hilarity of yesterday, greeted him with her usual salute—a French one, be it understood—upon both cheeks, and in all propriety.

And when Titus, overcome with ecstasy at being thus distinguished, turned round to see who were the witnesses of the gratifying occurrence, his eyes encountered those of Mrs. Miss, and Mr. Horatio Grimley, who were now quitting the concert-room on their way back to Islington, to take a tea *à la fourchette aux crevettes*, with Mrs. Hoddle, lately returned from the country, and, of course, tell her all they had seen; in which, we may safely anticipate, was included the sad career which young Ledbury was heedlessly following, and the disreputable connections he had formed, in all probability through his acquaintance with that Mr. Johnson.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE BREAK-UP OF MR. RAWKINS' MEDICAL ESTABLISHMENT.

FROM the very day of the Dispensary election, the results of the contest were made visible to public eyes in the abode of Mr. Koops. Within a fortnight the rails in front of the house were painted a most lively Islington green; and a small conservatory was established on the sills of the parlour-window, comprising three geraniums, two verbenas, and a fine specimen of the plant that smells like cherry-pie, all of which had been received from a travelling floriculturist, in exchange for a by-gone coat of Mr. Koops'. A gay drugget, of the real theatrical third-act-of-a-comedy drawing-room pattern was also laid down in the parlour, to hide the carpet; and the gentleman who had taken the first-floor unfurnished was prevailed upon to hang up some muslin curtains, which certainly looked better from the street than the former ones of faded moreen, bound with black velvet, and always awakening associations connected with the outside of Richardson's show.

Bright rays were evidently breaking upon the previous twilight of Mr. Koops' professional career. He had already been sent for to attend the servants of one of the Dispensary electors, who went away and never paid, which was, however, of no great consequence, the introduction into the family being the chief point gained; and his ambitious dreams began to take so high a flight that he anticipated some day even attending the Grimleys; to bring about which coveted event he made Mrs. Koops call on Mrs. Hoddle very frequently, and sing his praises in an indirect manner, well knowing that it would all go back to the Grimleys, according to custom.

But, like the little people in the Dutch weather-houses—those small meteorologists, whose race is so rapidly departing from the face of the earth—the more the coming sunshine of prosperity brought Mr. Koops from his modest mansion, to bask in its beams, the more did Mr. Rawkins retire to the recesses of his establishment, and prepare for taking his final leave of the stage upon which he had so long supported the character of a medical man, although that character had ungratefully refused to support him in return. Johnson and Prodgers were still with him; but, as there was nothing to do, their services might easily have been dispensed with. Mr. Rawkins divided his time between walking in many great-coats up high hills upon sultry days, in company with Mr. Dags, the trainer; shutting himself up upon some mysterious transaction on the second floor; paying undivided attention to the landlady at the corner; and studying new ancient statues in the back parlour of his house. As for Bob, who was still retained, he mechanically took down the shutters, and put them up again, swept out the surgery, and dusted the shelves as formerly; but his labour was perfectly unnecessary, for nobody came, his master having already

resigned his police and parish appointments. A bill upon the outside of the house also advised the passers-by that it was to let; and an advertisement, occasionally inserted in the *Times* and on the cover of the *Lancet*, gave hints to the world in general of a snug practice to be disposed of in a populous neighbourhood, with a retail attached, capable of great improvement. And so things ran to disorder. The flies wandered at their will over the blue and white packets of soda-powders, like alien guests in the deserted halls of former greatness; the ready-made pitch-plasters curled up with the sun, until they assumed the shape of wafer-cakes; the leeches gradually drooped and died in their crockery sarcophagus; and Mr. Prodgers, removing the brass tube of the gas-light, fitted on to it the ivory end of a stethoscope, and turned it into a "puff-and-dart," to whose missiles the plaster-of-paris horse from the centre pane of the window ultimately fell a martyr. The only things in the house which remained as usual were the pigeons, rabbits, and guinea-pigs; and they fluttered, scratched, and fed just the same as ever, awaiting the time when Hoppy should agree with Mr. Rawkins for the transfer of a part of them to his zoological bazaar at Cow Cross.

"What do you mean to do now, Jack?" inquired Mr. Prodgers of Johnson, as they sat upon the house-top one fine afternoon, towards the close of Mr. Rawkins' medical career.

"Heaven only knows; I should be very glad to tell you," was the reply. "Every plan I have formed is entirely knocked on the head, and, at a time, too, when I most wanted to see my way a little clearly. I wish I was in your place. There appears to be a fate against my ever getting on in life, with every exertion that I can make in the attempt."

"I wonder you don't look out for some girl with lots of tin," observed Mr. Prodgers, in his innocence of Johnson's attachment to Emma Ledbury. "You're such a jolly fellow, you know, you ought to find heaps of money."

"Look out for some girl with lots of tin!" Possibly Mr. Prodgers might have turned the advice in this phrase more elegantly, and adapted a more refined style of expression; but the meaning would have remained the same. The counsel was, however, thrown away upon Johnson; and would have been equally so had his feelings towards Emma never risen above the natural flirtation of a young man of six-and-twenty with a pretty girl of eighteen. For he had noticed in society—whether from looking through the false medium of a dis-tempered observation, or actually from some merciful dispensation of the Fates, we really cannot very well say—that those young ladies whose appearance was the strangest, whose manners were the least pleasing, and whose *tournure* altogether partook of the old-fashioned and unromantic to a very great degree, were usually pointed out to him as excellent catches, and worth making up to; whilst the pretty, interesting girls, who boasted of very few diamonds and rubies, beyond their own eyes and lips, were universally without a penny. But perhaps after all this balance of attractions was very right and proper, although Jack was always certain to which class he should

incline did he ever feel a desire to commit what, at that time, he deemed the very great impropriety of matrimony.

"I cannot make out what Rawkins is about," continued Prodgers, as he did not receive any particular reply from Johnson to his last observations.

"Writing away, as if for his life," replied Jack. "I cannot think myself what he is after; he has been all the week in that back room, as hard at work as a bank-clerk."

And this was true. For several days past Mr. Rawkins had been indefatigably employed with his pen, in company with a very small man, who had a very large head, and wore spectacles and a black gambroon surtout. The first impression of his assistants led to the belief that he was engaged in writing a "Complete Pigeon Fancier, and Rabbit-keeper's Manual;" but this idea was dispelled when, at the end of ten days, Mr. Rawkins brought down three enormous ledgers, and put them on the desk in the surgery, and disclosed their object to Johnson and Prodgers, of his own accord.

"These books," said Mr. Rawkins, "are not deceptions; they are merely the accounts of what my practice ought to have been. How do you think this page sounds?"

And, opening one of the tomes, labelled "DAY-BOOK," he commenced as follows:—

"*Die Martis*, May nine.—Mrs. Rosamond Pond, *Rep: Haust: six*, visit, *nocte manequé* (half-a-crown each); total, fourteen shillings.

"Sir Bagnigge Wells's Butler, *Extractio Dentis*, two-and-six; paid at the time.

"Amwell Hill, Esq., *Pulv: Ipecac: Comp: six. Mist*; saline, six ounce; that makes six shillings.

"Mrs. Peerless Poole. Attending—one guinea: taken out in poultry, new-laid eggs, and potatoes.

"Extra visit to Sir Hugh Myddleton's head. *Hirudines*—is that spelt right, Mr. Prodgers? leeches, you know—*hirudines*, eight; four shillings; and two-and-six—six-and-six.

"Total of day's receipts—um!—two, thirteen, thirteen-and-six, and five is—Ah!—altogether, two pounds ten. That will do, I think, pretty well. Don't you think so?"

"Very well indeed, sir; what is it?" asked Jack, all in a breath.

"Why, you see," said Mr. Rawkins, "my book-keeping has been very much neglected; but, as people taking a business like to know something about it, we have prepared these accounts very carefully and impartially, against anyone should come. You know it is no deception, because I might have attended all these people if I had chosen."

And the advertisements, after several nibbles, at last got a bite; for in a few mornings from this conversation a hack-cab drove up to the door, from which emerged a gentleman with a very hooky nose, having the air of a cockatoo in a suit of mourning, who, after a lively argument with the cabman, upon the subject of distance as compared to sixteenpence, entered the surgery.

Mr. Rawkins chanced to be in the shop at the moment, and somewhat suspecting his mission, received him with great courtesy.

"Mr. Rawkins, I presume?" said the visitor.

The head of the establishment bowed in acquiescence.

"I believe you have a practice to dispose of. What may be the reason of your giving it up?"

"Principally ill-health," returned Mr. Rawkins. The other looked at his muscular chest and florid face, and said nothing. "And a lucrative appointment to a county hospital," continued Mr. Rawkins. "I can assure you this is an eligible opportunity seldom to be met with. Look at these books, sir."

And giving the gentleman a chair, Mr. Rawkins placed the ledgers before him upon the counter.

"And for what consideration do you propose parting with the practice?" asked the visitor.

"Two years' purchase," replied Mr. Rawkins. "The annual receipts are five hundred pounds. I will sell it for a thousand, and give you a fortnight's introduction to the principal patients."

"That is a very short time, is it not?"

"Quite sufficient," replied Mr. Rawkins, "upon my honour." And his honour was not at all deteriorated by the affirmation.

"I can ensure you the whole of my present patients. They would employ anybody upon my recommendation."

"What other outlay would there be?" asked the stranger.

"The stock and fixtures to be taken at a valuation. I have the finest rabbits in London, as well as pigeons. I suppose you have heard of my lops and pouters?"

But, singular to say, the visitor had not, nor did he appear to comprehend very well what connection lops and pouters had with the normal pursuits of a general practitioner. However, he looked over the books, whilst Mr. Rawkins left the surgery for a few minutes, and going down into the kitchen, told Bob to creep up the area stairs, and come hurriedly into the shop from the street, stating that he—his master—was wanted at Lady Bunhill's immediately. This ruse Bob accomplished with much credit to himself; and the visitor, who gave his name as Mr. Pattle, late house-surgeon to the —— Hospital, thinking Mr. Rawkins was hurried, took his leave, promising to consult with his solicitor, and let the other gentleman know his determination at the earliest opportunity.

In the meantime, Johnson and Prodgers took their departure—the latter gentleman to share the abode of a brother student, wherein he was accommodated every night with a sofa and two great coats, for the remaining period of his pupilage; and Jack returned to his old lodgings, which he found just the same as when he quitted them, with the same fly-temples in the windows, the same dilapidated screens and stone-fruit upon the mantelpiece, and the identical rusty keys and scrooping locks that he had left there. Yet he involuntarily hummed, "As I view these scenes so charming," when he entered the old rooms, and surveyed the various humble attempts at second-floor ornamental furniture with intense satisfaction; albeit he had not made any great

advances in furthering his prospects since he had last dwelt amongst them. But when Titus came to see him again in his ancient quarters, and they had a pipe together as formerly, with some of the celebrated "commingled" that was still to be obtained "round the corner," as well as talked over their intentions, and unburdened themselves of all their secrets to each other, Jack found, after all, there was nothing like being master of your own time, although he had certainly not much to complain of restraint during his abode with Mr. Rawkins.

A fortnight passed away, and one bright sunny afternoon the Grimleys were taking a walk in the pleasant locality that lies between Islington and Hornsey, when their attention was excited by the sudden appearance of a mob of people at the end of one of the roads, shouting, cheering, and evidently approaching them at a swift pace. Somewhat alarmed at the tumult, which reached them plainly even from a distance, they opened the gate of one of the fields, and took their position behind it until the crowd had passed, their first ideas of the assemblage being connected with some great political riot. On came the mass, screaming, jostling, and running as if a regiment of cavalry was at their heels, and then, to their speechless astonishment, the Grimleys perceived Mr. Rawkins in the centre of the great body and its accompanying cloud of dust, bounding like an antelope along the turnpike road, attired in a linen jacket and drawers, with a handkerchief tied round his head, and a short stick in his hand, with which he appeared to be propelling himself against the air. He shot past them like an arrow, and in another minute was concealed, together with his followers, by a turn in the road.

This was the last appearance of that remarkable gentleman in Islington or its vicinity. Like the Irish chieftain O'Donoghue, who one fine morning galloped across the Lake of Killarney, and then faded from the view of the wondering beholders in the mists that enveloped him, he was never seen again. That he lost his match was subsequently known by popular report; that he parted with his practice for a tithe of what he asked for it was promulgated by Mrs. Huddle, who knew some friends of Mr. Pattle; and that his pigeons and rabbits found an ultimate home in Cow Cross, Hoppy was enabled to affirm. Within a few weeks the retail establishment at the corner also changed hands, and the landlady disappeared as well; but in what direction was not ascertained until long afterwards. And then Mr. Ledbury was the medium of communicating the intelligence to the public; it will be given forth in due season, before we quite close this eventful history. Bob remained with Mr. Pattle, together with his old friend the leech; but when Mr. Pattle retired from practice, which he did in the course of a few months, from having nothing to do beside, the small assistant paid a short visit to his *Alma Mater*, the Union workhouse, and finally found a permanent situation in the establishment of—somebody we could name, but it is not yet time.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE UNEXPECTED JOURNEY—OSTEND AND BRUSSELS.

FOR some weeks after the events of the last chapter little occurred to diversify the ordinary routine of every-day life with any of the personages connected with our chronicles. Emma Ledbury still remained at Clumpley; but she had communicated all her secrets to Fanny Wilmer, after the usual manner of young ladies when they first get engaged; and now ventured to correspond with Johnson, who was never tired of receiving the delicate *billets*—so small and fairy-like, that it was a wonder they were not lost amidst the million commonplace despatches they travelled with—but used to peruse and re-peruse them, long after he knew the contents by heart. Titus was tolerably employed in making himself generally useful to his father, or passing his evenings with Johnson; and Jack himself still kept his head full of schemes for future advancement. Mrs. Ledbury, according to custom at this time of year, began to throw out masked hints of the benefit her health would receive from a visit to some seaside watering-place, casting forth Herne Bay as a pilot-balloon to see which way the wind blew, and when she had ascertained that the current was tolerably favourable, launching out to Brighton (which would be so pleasant and convenient for Mr. Ledbury senior, in consequence of the railway), and even aspiring to a voyage across the Channel, which might terminate at Boulogne or Havre. And the Grinleys, with the assistance of Mrs. Huddle, employed themselves principally in canvassing the probable results of Mr. Titus Ledbury's ill-judged attachment to an opera-dancer—they had always said no good would come from his Parisian trip with that Mr. Johnson—and publicly thanking Providence that their Horace had no similar propensities or acquaintances. But they were just as overwhelming as ever, when they met the Ledburys, in their courtesies and inquiries after their "dear little Walter," and the other branches of the family.

One evening old Mr. Ledbury returned from his house of business in the city in a state of great perplexity. A document, of large pecuniary importance, as connected with his mercantile transactions, required the attested signature of a former partner in his establishment—a Mr. Howard, who had been for three or four years past residing at Milan, whilst he conducted some extensive manufacturing works between that city and Verona, on the line of a contemplated railway at Venice. His embarrassment arose from the difficulty of finding anyone whom he could entrust with this mission. His solicitor, it is true, offered to undertake it, but this plan was altogether too expensive; and there was not one of his clerks who was at all acquainted with continental usages or methods of travelling. At last it struck him that he might make Titus serviceable in this respect, telling him at the same time that he did not wish him to go alone—

for his good-natured simplicity was not unlikely to involve him in some calamity—but that he would pay the expenses of any experienced person he chose to take with him, provided, of course, that they kept within the bounds of prudence. And, as may be imagined, Titus was not long in acquiescing in the suggestion, or making choice of a companion. The instant he became acquainted with his father's proposition, he rushed off to Jack Johnson, who did not appear to throw any difficulties in the way, but by the next morning had calculated the expense, laid out the time, and arranged the route which they should take, by which they might see most with very little extra delay. For Jack sat up nearly all night, and with an ancient map and two or three old guide-books, dotted and pencilled off the whole journey against Titus called upon him. Old Mr. Ledbury himself made no objections. He had been pleased with Johnson's candour at their interview respecting his attentions to Emma, and knew that, with all his hilarity, he had no lack of honour or common sense.

"This is a happiness I never expected," said Jack, when Titus called the next day. "To think, after all, Leddy, that you and I should be going abroad again!"

"Capital," answered Ledbury; "and nothing to pay! I suppose we shall do it in style this time, Jack. Post-carriages, you know, and the best part of the steamers—not like shabbroons."

"You leave it all to me," replied Johnson, smiling. "Only recollect, in travelling, the more you pay, the less you always see, or enjoy yourselves. I've marked out such a trip!"

"Where are we going, then?"

"Oh! the Rhine, Switzerland, the Alps, and I don't know where all—with, perhaps, a passing glimpse of Paris as we return, to see if any of our old friends are in existence. What do you say to that?"

"I leave everything to you, Jack," returned Ledbury. "My head is beginning to get into such a whirl that I shall not be able to think about anything else until we start. But I say, Jack, we shall post sometimes, shan't we?"

"I have told you I will make every proper arrangement," said Johnson, still amused at the evident desire of Titus to travel in a distinguished manner. "I am not quite sure whether we shall ride at all."

"Why, Jack, we can't walk from London to Milan!" said Mr. Ledbury, aghast with terror.

"Don't distress yourself, Leddy," replied Johnson; "I'm going out now to buy some things, and you had better come with me."

It did not take Mr. Ledbury long to make up his mind to go with Jack, and pack up his wardrobe. He longed to let his mustachios grow; but all the efforts he had made for years to get them to shoot had been failures; and the same with regard to his whiskers. None of the wonderful things which the young men who cut his hair always recommended answered; his consumption of Circassian cream must have affected, in no small degree, the trade of the Black Sea and the regions of the Caucasus; but still his face was smooth. And once, when he had been rash enough to buy a pair of false mustachios, that

were fixed with a spring to his nostrils, he brought on such a wonderful fit of sneezing that he had well-nigh blown all his brains out by the same route as those of the Egyptian mummies are reported by cunning men who delight in unrolling those bales of pitchy mortality to have left their tenement. So that he gave up the notion, fondly as he clung to it; and determined upon trusting, as heretofore, to his elegant manners, and knowledge of foreign style generally, to be considered a true Parisian.

And, acting under Jack's advice, Mr. Ledbury set off to make purchases for the voyage—the most important being some very serviceable shoes, and two old soldiers' knapsacks, which were procured after diving into some of the incomprehensible thoroughfares in the neighbourhood of Tower Hill. They also bought two candle-boxes, and these, in an envelope of ticking, looked very military when placed on the top of the knapsacks—besides being serviceable, as Johnson affirmed, to carry minor articles of the toilet, which could be got at easily, without unstrapping the entire package. And, finally, two stout blouses were ordered, with breast-pockets inside, to contain their passports, and, in Mr. Ledbury's case, the document as well, which was the chief object of their journey. As the outfit was not very extensive, it did not take a great deal of time to get it in readiness; and, after a short, flying visit to Clumpsey, made upon the sly, they fixed the day for starting. Previously to this, however, Jack dined with Titus at his father's house; and considerably raised himself in the old gentleman's estimation by the attention he paid to his instructions respecting the business they were going upon, as well as the intelligence he exhibited about all matters connected with their intended route. So that things, upon the whole, looked tolerably cheering; and Jack's spirits rose in proportion, until Titus affirmed that he had never seen him so perfectly like what he used to be since they left Paris.

The sun was shining brightly the next morning, and the Thames quivered and sparkled in the beams as it caught a tint of unwonted blue from the cloudless sky above, when, about noon, Mr. Ledbury and his friend, fully equipped for their intended pilgrimage, climbed up the sides, and stood upon the deck of the good steamship, the *Earl of Liverpool*, bound for Ostend. The wind was fair, the tide serviceable, the weather fine, and everything looked lively and animated. Even the old Tower, off which the packet lay, appeared to have become quite juvenile again, and lifted up its numerous turrets amongst the modern warehouses and edifices by which it was surrounded, with an air half supercilious, half companionable; as if it knew its importance and position in architectural society, but wished to appear upon friendly and visiting terms with the adjacent structures of the present day; like some old bachelor, who, whilst he does not think himself at all too *passé* to associate with young cavaliers, still cannot help looking down upon them as giddy and inexperienced youths, quite unworthy of his patronage.

In ten minutes the word was given to "go ahead," and the packet moved on. Ledbury and Jack had deposited their knapsacks in an

artful corner of the fore-cabin, and took up their positions at the head of the boat as she progressed down the Pool, where they were soon joined by other passengers, some bound upon a tour like themselves, with whom they compared intentions and proposed lines of journey. To those who had determined ultimately to arrive in Paris Mr. Ledbury was particularly communicative, speaking with an air of great authority upon everything connected with that capital. But whilst he was doing this, he could not help thinking how much his mind had expanded, and what a man of the world he had become since that time twelvemonth, when he first started to France with Jack Johnson; how that tour had invested him with those distinguished manners which he always assumed in polite society; and what a close relationship the casual voyage with his friend was likely to lead to. There were some very pleasant people on board, and the time passed cheerfully enough; for the sea was tolerably well behaved, except for the last few hours of the voyage, when, as it got dark, and somewhat chilly, the majority of the company went below, and plunged into tea and brandy-and-water for very distraction.

And then came that monotonous part of the voyage which all accustomed to long steamboat travelling can so readily call to mind. The close, confined atmosphere of the cabin, dimly lighted by the lamp in the centre, quivering, together with the entire vessel, from every vibration of the engine and paddle-wheel; the silence of the company, after the previous excitement of the early portion of the voyage, as they lounged about in various uneasy fashions upon the seats, luggage, and even the tables—a silence continuously broken by the restless tramp of the passengers overhead; the rush of water along the sides of the boat; the creaking of every separate piece of wainscot and timber with her laborious oscillation through the lashing sea, to which the jingling of tea-things and tumblers in cupboards and lockers kept up an undying accompaniment: all this, coupled with the feeling, which could never be entirely dispelled, that the huge ark, crowded with life—her vast glowing furnaces blazing and roaring, from which a train of bright scintillations flew, whirling off in infernal gambols upon the screeching wind—was but a speck upon the leaping wilderness of dark and boiling waters—that her comparative strength was as nothing against the power of the mighty elements with whom she was at strife.

But in spite of all discomfort, the night wore away. About two in the morning Johnson and Ledbury went upon deck, when the lights of Ostend were plainly visible ahead; and in another half-hour they came alongside the port, where they were received in great form by a deputation of *douaniers*, according to the customary politeness of foreign landing-places. Having merely their knapsacks with them, upon Jack's advice, these were unstrapped and exhibited to the officers, who, perceiving that there was nothing very important in them, allowed them to go at once on shore. This was a great accommodation; for all the rest of the luggage had to remain in the vessel until it was carted up to the custom-house, guarded by patrols with loaded guns, as if the authorities feared the carpet-bags would rise in

rebellion, and run away of their own accord without being examined. Their passports were, however, demanded of them; and they were directed to apply for them again at the *bureau*, as soon after six in the morning as they liked.

"Come along, Mr. F.; Susan, look after the children—come along!" exclaimed a very bustling lady; one of the saloon-passengers, as she collected her party, and made a sally along the plank, carrying an enormous handbox.

"On ne passe pas avec les cartons, madame," growled a gendarme, who was watching the egress of passengers; "on ne passe pas."

"Oui, monssou, oui," returned the lady, with great amiability; "c'est tout droit—j'ai ma passe port—je compron. Now, Mr. F., pray do not leave everything to me; show the man the passport." And the lady moved on again.

"Non, madame!" thundered the gendarme again, charging the handbox with the butt-end of his firelock; "non, madame; on ne passe pas—pas passeport."

This final alliteration was beyond all power of comprehension, and the lady remained for an instant in great wrath.

"I believe, ma'am," said Johnson, "he will not allow you to leave the boat with that luggage."

"I am perfectly aware of what he means, sir!" replied the lady, haughtily. "Edward! why don't you lay hold of Susan? Take her hand directly, sir. Monssou," she continued, turning once more to the officer, "ici sont mes choses du soir, et il me faut besoin beaucoup."

"Pouvez-pas sortir avec ces effets," was all the answer made to this confession by the guard.

"Now, ma'am," cried one of the steamboat's company, "I must trouble you to go one way or the other; you are blocking up the gang."

"Did you ever hear of such an imposition?" exclaimed the lady, in extreme anger, turning round and addressing the passengers generally, and no one in particular. "To think the many times that I have gone on shore at Ramsgate, and never was I so treated. Never again—no, never any more, Mr. Frazer, will I come to foreign parts."

"I never wished you to now, my dear," said Mr. Frazer, quietly.

"Ugh!" replied the lady; and forcing her way back to the deck, was soon lost, together with her train, amidst the throng of passengers and luggage.

"Montez, messieurs—à la Grand Hôtel!" cried the driver of a very curious omnibus surmounted by a tin chandelier, who turned about in all directions after he had performed a violent concerto upon the bugle.

"Hôtel Bellevue!"

"Bath Hotel, gentlemen and ladies," cried an English voice, which there was no mistaking.

"Which shall we go to, Jack?" asked Titus.

"Devil a one," replied Johnson; "we shall be off to Brussels by

the first train. If you think it worth while going to bed at three to get up again at five, you can choose which hotel you like."

"Ah, I see," replied Mr. Ledbury; "but I am very hungry."

"Well, come in here, then, and we will get something to eat," answered Jack.

Whereupon they turned into the *Maison Blanche*, a public-house situated immediately upon the port, where all the people spoke the English language, and did not particularly object to take English money, after a little persuasion. A shilling covered the expense of some brandy-cherries and the never-failing omelette; and when they had finished, as day was breaking, and their appetites were somewhat appeased, they agreed to walk about and see what they could of the town.

If all the docks, locks, canals, and basins in and about London were collected together, and upon the banks of these some ingenious architects, who had closely studied the style of the houses contained in the Dutch toy-boxes, were to build various rows and streets of dwellings in the same fashion; if other industrious people were to paint the aforesaid houses blue, green, and yellow, and employ their leisure time in sowing grass-seed between the paving-stones, and mooring squabby Dutch-built boats against the quays, there to remain perpetually—when all these things had been accomplished, they would have produced a very good imitation of Ostend. The surrounding land is swampy, and the adjacent water treacherous, particularly when the wind blows off shore; whilst the town itself, at the best of times dreary enough to suit the most moping of its inhabitants, did not look over lively to Jack Johnson and his companion at that time in the morning when nobody was about except the sentinels, and all the white venetian blinds were closely shut. But the mere idea that it was a foreign place invested it with a certain degree of interest.

"I wonder what that means?" said Mr. Ledbury, as he read over a door the inscription, "VERKOOPT MEN DRUNKEN."

"The Ostenders are addicted to strong liquors," replied Jack, "and frequent restraint is necessary. That means, 'men are cooped up here when they are drunk.'"

"Law!" exclaimed Titus, who for the time took it all in as most veracious information. "They must be a very tipsy people, for I have seen twenty houses with the same notice."

"They are," returned Jack; and then, smiling, he added, "No, no, Leddy—it's a shame to sell you now—it's only the Flemish for 'allowed to be drunk on the premises.'"

They wandered about the town, seeing all that was to be seen, which was nothing, until the time arrived for them to go and look after their passports. A crowd of people were waiting at the doors of the office, as if they had belonged to a theatre on a benefit night; and when the gate opened, the rush was very great, inasmuch that the fierce-looking patrol in attendance was wedged behind the door, against the wall, by the pressure, from which he was quite unable to extricate himself. And so he waxed exceedingly spiteful, and swore many incomprehensible foreign oaths, in which thunder and hackney

coaches appeared to play principal parts ; nor was his humour lessened by a request, or rather an order, from Jack Johnson that he would assume a state of rapidly-ascending flame, and keep his powder dry ; by which proceedings, and putting his trust in pipe-clay and fireworks, he might eventually prosper ; all which advice, being exceedingly figurative, and partaking largely of British idiomatic impertinence, greatly diverted the rest of the travellers, who are ever keenly susceptible of such fun as depends upon putting alien custom-house officers to any species of discomfort. And when the passports had been delivered, the majority of the passengers went to look after their luggage at the custom-house, and go through another ordeal of wrangling, misunderstanding, and grumbling. But Ledbury and Jack, having literally all they had with them upon their backs, sauntered once more along the quays, and finally sat down upon their knapsacks in front of the post-office, and conversed upon things in general, until the gates of the railway were thrown open for the departure of the earliest train, and they took their places in the cheap *wagon* that was to convey them to Brussels.

Their third-class carriage was soon filled ; and then, upon a signal from one of the conductors, who blew a horn instead of ringing a bell, the train moved on. They were entirely amongst strangers—peasants in blue blouses, and chubby fresh-looking Flemish girls in white caps, who talked unceasingly in some strange language, which even Jack Johnson could make nothing of, leaving Mr. Ledbury entirely out of the question. They did not even see any of their fellow-passengers on board the steamer, although they knew many of them were going on by the train ; but the English seldom patronise what is cheap when they travel ; and therefore all the rest had taken their places in the most expensive carriages, wherein, by associating one with another, and not seeing much of the country they were passing, one of their great pleasures of travelling was obtained. Finding that he could not understand the *patois* of his fellow-travellers any more than they could make out his French, Jack thought the best plan he could go upon was to talk English with a Dutch accent ; by which means he occasionally made himself slightly comprehensible in endeavouring to find out the names of various places which they passed. As for Mr. Ledbury, he made important political observations without talking, the chief point of gratification up to the present time being that he had seen the name "COCKEREL, MAKER, LIEGE," upon one of the engines, to which he immediately called Jack Johnson's attention, as an evidence of British enterprise in distant lands.

The morning was very fine, and the whole journey remarkably exhilarating ; nor had Mr. Ledbury any idea of what a corn country meant, until the train flew by the vast fields of ripening grain, for miles and miles, which sometimes came close to the edge of the line. Here and there the landscape was remarkably English in its appearance ; but this was soon dispelled by the proximity of some old Flemish town, with its fortifications and quaint gables, especially at Bruges, where the railway ran through the very centre of the city. They travelled very rapidly, sometimes even quicker than in England ;

and although Mr. Ledbury, from want of proper rest the night before, occasionally dozed for a few minutes, until his head reclined upon the shoulders of a good-looking *paysanne* who sat next to him, from which it was usually heaved off in a very unceremonious manner, yet he contrived to see a great deal. As for Jack Johnson, he was as lively as ever, want of sleep not appearing to produce the slightest effect upon him; but having found out that the conductor was a Belgian, they immediately had a pipe together and a glass of *schnaps*, which people brought up to the carriages whenever the train stopped, as well as cakes, fruit, and various unknown drinks.

They arrived at Brussels some time before noon, having accomplished the journey from the Tower Stairs considerably under four-and-twenty hours, and, once more shouldering their knapsacks, marched into the city in search of an hotel. The very feeling of being abroad again sufficed to put Jack in the highest spirits, and he addressed all sorts of gallant compliments to the *grisettes* who were standing at the doors of the various shops, and who, if they had not altogether the *tournure* of their Parisian sisterhood, were, in most instances, amazingly pretty. And nothing could exceed the placid benignancy of Mr. Ledbury's smile as, in his blue macintosh cap and spectacles, he marched on with a military air and disembarassed bearing, as if his knapsack had been a mere nothing, now and then turning a look of mild reproof upon the little boys, who, invariably attracted by his appearance, huzzaed him as he went by, or ran after him in quest of small coin, which he distributed from the pocket of his blouse in the form of English halfpence—the remnants of the last change he had taken in London.

After wandering about many streets without finding an establishment likely to suit their purpose, they at last pitched upon the Hotel de l'Union, in the Grand Place, where they took possession of a large cheerful room, overlooking the market, and forthwith ordered a very becoming breakfast. And very delighted were they both when the meal appeared in the old style—the pure white plates and cups and saucers, the clinking beet-root sugar, the black bottle of *vin ordinaire*, the capital coffee, the undeniable *côtelettes* and the *petite verre* of fine old Cognac to *chasser* the rest down with; all this, laid out by the fair hands of Mademoiselle Vandercammer herself, the host's pretty daughter, well-nigh drove Mr. Ledbury distracted. Besides, too, it was the period of the *Kermasse*; and, from certain announcements Jack had seen upon the walls, he intended to go that night to a ball outside the barrier—how natural it sounded!—and once more have a taste of his old life. Indeed, when they had made their toilets, and turned out for a walk in the town, it required a very little stretch of the imagination to fancy themselves once more in Paris, with Jules, Henri, Aimée, and all their other former acquaintances of the Quartier Latin, ready to meet them at every turn of the streets.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE TOURISTS PURSUE THEIR JOURNEY ALONG THE RHINE.

THE two days which Ledbury and Jack devoted to the inspection of Brussels and its neighbourhood passed pleasantly enough ; and they saw everything that unceasing activity from six in the morning until nine at night enabled them to do. For, the two great ends of travel being apparently, on the one hand, to progress with moderate speed from any one place to another that fashion may dictate ; and, on the other, to visit everything worthy of genteel notice in foreign localities, the English, with laudable economy, are invariably accustomed to combine these two objects, and scamper through museums and galleries as speedily as they traverse the grand *routes*, which is a plan highly to be recommended : inasmuch as it does not allow the intellects time to get dull, but enables travellers to draw admirable comparisons between different places, from vivid impressions left of the last interesting spot they visited. And, finally, the tour being accomplished, it leaves that agreeable jumble of opinions and recollections in the mind which is so admirably adapted to the general tone of society and conversation at the present day.

Of course, the greater part of one out of the two days were devoted to a visit to Waterloo, from which spot Mr. Ledbury brought many interesting souvenirs of the engagement, thinking himself highly favoured in being able to procure such relics after so great a lapse of time. But he was not aware that in the almanacks of the cottagers round Mont St. Jean might be found in the gardening directions, "*Now plant bullets for summer crops ; water old swords for rust, and dig up stocks and barrels*"—or that the ingenious artificers in Liége were in the habit of exporting numberless eagles, which being duly fledged with mould, and coated with verdigris from bruised grape-stalks, exceeded their original value one hundredfold. Mr. Ledbury only thought of the distinguished effect these souvenirs would have when displayed upon the cheffonier at his Islington home ; and the interest they would excite when admiring visitors were informed that he himself had brought them from the field of battle—a statement which for the time, he felt, must associate him with the Duke of Wellington and the last charge of the Imperial Guard. And he wrote his name in the book at the foot of the steps leading to the summit of the mound, wherein it is still to be seen, with a throbbing heart and an extra flourish, feeling additional pride because Jack Johnson had just argued down a foreign gentleman, who was endeavouring to prove that the French won the battle beyond all doubt, although the Englishmen, compared with the Emperor's army, were as ten to one—a belief exceedingly prevalent with our "natural enemies." Jack merely wrote his name down as the "*Marquis de Puit-aux-cleres*" (or Clerkenwell), a title which produced a great sensation in the mind

of the keeper of the archives. And then, presenting that individual with a franc, they walked back to Brussels, somewhat tired, just as the setting sun was throwing as many of its beams as it could contrive to do through the dense foliage of the forest of Soigny.

They started again the next morning for Liège—the Birmingham of Belgium—by the railway; and, without any particular adventure beyond the ordinary casualties of travelling, went on from that place by diligence to Aix-la-Chapelle. Not finding anything remarkable to detain them at that dull resort of fashion tumbled into decay, they took advantage of a night-conveyance, which should ultimately deposit them at Cologne, after making a very excellent dinner at the Hôtel du Grande Monarque. The vehicle was not a diligence, nor a broad-wheeled waggon, nor a hackney coach; neither was it an errand-cart, nor a travelling show, but it evidently enjoyed an extensive family connection with all these varieties of carriages, and was formed of pieces of each, put together in a very rickety manner, like a composite plate of supper fragments, the day after a party, endeavouring to do duty at dinner for a perfect dish.

There was not a great deal to observe upon the road, principally from the natural reason that the night was pitch dark; but nevertheless Jack Johnson kept all alive with unceasing energy, to the great delight of their fellow-passengers, not one of whom would he allow to think of going to sleep. Besides themselves there were three travellers in the interior—two Englishmen and a German—the latter of whom indulged in a large pipe continuously, and would have preferred sitting with both windows up, until the rest could have hung their hats upon the smoke, had he not been overruled by a majority; when he retired into a corner of the vehicle, and maintained a grave silence during the remainder of the journey; his position and the fact that he was awake being alone indicated by the glowing weed in his meerschaum, which every now and then lighted up the interior of the vehicle, revealing for an instant the faces of the travellers to each other through the lurid vapour that pervaded it. The Englishmen were two young barristers who had just been “called” at the Middle Temple—rather verdant, but, withal, exceedingly argumentative, as they showed by their conversation, which broke into discussions and wrangling upon every single observation started by either of them, in common with most of their class, who, because quibbling is their trade, think they cannot apprentice themselves too early to its elements.

“Have you ever been to Cologne, sir?” inquired Jack, giving Ledbury a quiet nudge, and addressing the elder of their two compatriots.

“No, sir—never; at least—that is, I may say—never. Is it worth seeing?”

“The ‘eau’ is the chief natural curiosity,” replied Jack. “You will be astonished at the fountains of it in the market-place.”

“God bless me!” exclaimed their companion; “I had no idea that it was a spontaneous production!”

“Oh, yes,” returned Jack. “There are supposed to be immense

strata of fossil flowers in the secondary formation below Cologne, which produce it. Are you a chemist, sir?"

"I have attended lectures at the Polytechnic and Adelaide Gallery," answered the other.

"Ah, then, of course you will understand me," said Johnson. "Water is decomposed; its oxygen and hydrogen unite with the carbon of the anthracite it passes through, the three forming alcohol, which extracts the essence of the fossil flowers, and, becoming diluted by springs, bubbles up in the form of proof spirit."

And, having supported his assertion thus far, Jack paused to take a little breath.

"Farina is the chief merchant of it, I believe?" observed the other traveller, after a short pause of bewilderment.

"He has a tolerable share," answered Jack; "but the two great retailers are Gasthaus and Handlung; you will see their names and pump-rooms all over Germany."

"How do you propose going up the Rhine, sir?" asked Mr. Ledbury, wishing to turn the conversation, for fear their companions should begin to smoke as well as the German.

"We intend to walk the greater part of the way—do you?"

"No," interrupted Jack; "we shall go in the 'damp shift.'"

"What an odd name for a steamer that is!"

"Very; but it is the original one. When the boats were first started, they were uncommonly leaky and inconvenient; but there were no others, and they were christened by that name. Some of the machinery was so pervious that the vapour came out in a perfect bath, or, in German, *bad*, and these were called 'damned bad shifts.' Very like English, is it not?"

"Remarkably," replied the other.

"So is the mail," continued Jack, "which they very properly call a 'snail-post.'"

And as the tourists seemed desirous of receiving all this information, which Jack assured them they would not find in any guide or handbook ever published, he continued in the same strain, to the great amusement, not unmingled with fear, of Mr. Ledbury; until, at five in the morning, their conveyance rolled through the narrow, unpaved, offensive—(may we add stinking?)—thoroughfares of that "dirty focus of decaying Catholicism," the city of Cologne. Here the passengers quitted the diligence, having previously shaken the German from a narcotic lethargy into which he had fallen; whereupon he forthwith lighted a fresh pipe, and, puffing like a steamer, cleared outwards with his cargo, which was a green pasteboard hat-box, bound with yellow; then, having taken half a turn astern to see that he had left nothing behind, began to go ahead easy, until he was out of sight.

The two Englishmen made a great deal to do about a portmanteau, which was finally discovered to have been left behind at Aix-la-Chapelle, and somebody else's, who had been staying there, brought on by mistake; and Ledbury and Jack Johnson, once more getting their knapsacks, wished them a pleasant journey as they started down towards the river.

"Well," said Jack, when they were out of hearing, "I have met many muffs, but——"

And what he would next have said was lost as he turned the corner, and stood with Ledbury upon the quay, alongside of which the steamboat *Königin Victoria* was awaiting her cargo, previously to leaving at six o'clock for Coblenz.

Although we have all been told how sweet it is to wander when daybeams decline, and sunset is gilding the beautiful property of the singer for the time being; yet certainly the appearance of the Rhine, as it was now presented to the view of our friends, was anything but particularly captivating, or productive of the saccharine feeling above mentioned. The river itself was todgy and discoloured, the banks were low and uninteresting, and the city appeared to have started into animation from one of the popular semicircular views of spires, cranes, and weathercocks, which we meet with on the sides of eau de Cologne boxes. Jack, who had been part of the journey before, did not expect anything else; but Mr. Ledbury, who had fancied himself a Rhenish jäger ever since he left Aix-la-Chapelle, almost regretting he had not got a pair of green tights and a bugle-horn, to appear distinguished, and who pictured the Rhine as bordered by a never-ending castled crag of Drachenfels, was somewhat disappointed. He was not singular, however, in this feeling; for, thanks to the florid descriptions of enthusiastic travellers, and highly-coloured sketches of picturesque artists, there are few continental show places which come up to the expectations formed of them by visitors.

The travellers soon began to arrive on board in great numbers, five out of seven being English; and here Ledbury found plenty of subjects for amusement, as he sat upon a tub with Jack at the forepart of the vessel and watched their advent, in the different British migratory classes of aristocratic, respectable, and *parvenu*, neither of which grades include the few strange persons who merely voyage for inclination or knowledge—travelling, in most cases, being a compulsory pilgrimage, by which the tourists hold their caste in society. Some went directly into the cabin, and began to eat and drink; others took up their stations upon deck under the awning, with maps and panoramas almost as long as the steamboat, and amused themselves with pricking out the different places, and wondering when they should come to the ruined castles and vineyards. Two or three very exclusive folks got into their carriages, which were upon deck, and remained there the whole journey, to avoid contamination from the inferior classes; couriers of one party established flirtation with the ladies' maids of another from rumble to rumble; whilst the Germans lighted mighty pipes, and were soon lost in an envelope of smoke and their own reflections. A few Englishmen tried to imitate them, but generally the attempt was a dead failure; for the Germans usually incline to pipes, whilst our countrymen prefer cigars—the latter occasionally removing the weed from their lips, as they blow out the smoke into the air and look at it; whilst the former puff continuously, never turning to the right or left until the bowl of their meerschaum is exhausted.

Ledbury, Jack, and one or two other young men who were roughing it with knapsacks like themselves, took possession of the tubs, and formed a little *coterie* at the head of the boat, where they solaced themselves with various pint bottles of Moselle during the earlier portion of the journey. For beyond Cologne the banks of the Rhine are not over-likely, approaching, in their general character, to that romantic portion of the Thames on the Essex side, between Blackwall and Purfleet, occasionally varied by a melancholy windmill, a few dismal trees, evidently in very low spirits, or a drooping village. Indeed, there was nothing in the world to attract their attention until they came to Bonn, except a large bell, of peculiar annoying powers which was always rung, upon approaching any landing-place, directly in their ears. But at Bonn, where they stopped for passengers, rather a fearful gathering of the great unshaved came down to see the boat arrive, to each of whom Jack Johnson made several polite bows from his perch on the top of the tub; and subsequently addressed them upon the state of things in general, his favourite theme, in a speech of vast power, which was only cut short by the steamer once more pursuing her journey.

There was a gentleman amongst their party who particularly took Jack's fancy. He was very slim, and very pensive, with lay-down collars, and a countenance expressive of an innate disposition something between indigestion and romance. He had a little memorandum-book, with a little pistol pencil-case, and he took rapid views of the different objects on the banks as they presented themselves, in the style of shy outline, and looked poetical, and now and then said "Beautiful!" when there was nothing to be seen but a rickety old boat-house, with an intensity of expression that proved him of no ordinary mind. He did not, at first, appear to know exactly what to make of Jack Johnson; but when that facetious gentleman began to tell traditions about the Rhine to the other, calling to mind what he had read, and inventing what he had not, he forthwith treated him with the greatest deference.

"You appear well acquainted with the legends of this lovely river," he said to Jack.

"Know them all, sir," replied Johnson: "that is to say, all those that are true."

"I believe they sometimes vary in different chronicles," observed the pensive traveller.

"Oh, very much," answered Jack. "I divide the legends of the Rhine into three heads: the *Lyrical*, the *Handbook*, and the *Paid-by-the-Sheet*."

"And what is the difference?"

"Just this: the *Lyricals* are the short traditions at the head of drawing-room songs. They run thus:—

"The celebrated Roland having been reported to have died in Palestine, his betrothed bride took the veil, and retired to the convent of Nonenworth. Upon his return, the brave warrior died of a broken heart. The ruins of Rolandseck, which he built, suggested the following ballad."

“Adapt the legend to some popular operatic air, get the view lithographed for the title-page, and there you have it.”

“And what is the *Handbook* style, Jack?” asked Ledbury, quite proud of his friend, although the pensive gentleman looked as if he thought the definition a little too commonplace.

“Oh! that has more of the Guide about it,” replied Johnson. “The tradition is the same: but it is better suited for persons about to marry—I mean to travel—or to do both. It begins:—“After leaving the Drächenfels, the river contracts to an accelerated current, on the right bank of which, above the island of Nonenworth, are seen the ruins of Rolandseck. Tradition assigns this stronghold to have been built by Roland, the nephew of Charlemagne, who being engaged to a lady, etc., and all the rest of it.”

“And the *Paid-by-the-Sheet*?” asked the pensive gentleman, who was travelling in search of inspiration, in order that he might one day write for an annual.

“Why,” said Jack, “the object then is to take up the Vauxhallham style of composition, and make the subject go as far as it can, with or without plates. You must cut the story remarkably thin in this case, and turn it into a tale, such as—‘The last rays of the declining sun were gilding the tower-capped heights of Godesberg, as a solitary horseman, in the costume of an Eastern warrior, pursued his lonely journey along the right bank of the majestic Rhine.’”

“Now, you know, all this comes to the same in the end—that the lady had gone into a convent; but the object is to cover paper, and so the gold of the legend is beaten out into leaf accordingly. Kellner! noch eine halbe flasche Moselwein.”

This particular explanation, coupled with the flourish of German at the end, immediately caused everybody to look upon Jack as a very talented personage, and compliment him thereupon. Whereat Jack drank their respective healths when the wine arrived, and then sang “The Huntsman’s Chorus,” arranged as a solo, to express his enthusiasm at being on the Rhine, in which Mr. Ledbury was rash enough to join. But finding he came in at the wrong place with “Hark, follow!” whilst Jack was defining the chase as a pleasure worthy of princes, he was immediately silent, and evinced great confusion at having thus distinguished himself.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MR. LEDBURY'S INSPIRATION, AND JACK JOHNSON'S VERSION OF THE
LEGEND OF DRACHENFELS.

ALL this time the packet had been gallantly working against the stream; and before long they were in the midst of the crags and castles which Mr. Ledbury had so panted to look upon. The pensive gentleman, too, wrote several "impromptus;" and Titus, who believed it severely compulsory upon every one to be inspired under such circumstances, got a pencil and the back of a letter, and was for some time occupied apparently in composition, whilst Jack was carrying on conversation with some other travellers.

"What are you after, Leddy?" asked Johnson, as his companions left him for a short time, to look at some view they were passing.

"Now you'll laugh," said Titus, "if I tell you."

"No, I won't," replied Jack. Honour bright! Is it a view?"

"No, it's a little poem," said Titus. "I thought it might do for any album I might be asked to write in when I got home. I don't mind reading it, if you won't laugh."

"Go on, sir, pray," said the pensive gentleman.

"Stop! get up on the tub, and read it properly," said Jack.

Titus, whom Jack could persuade to anything, mounted the tub, and commenced:—

"I call it 'My Hoxton Home.'"

"But you don't live there," interrupted Jack; "you live at Islington."

"Oh! hang it, Jack," returned Titus; it's near enough—poetic licence, you know. 'My Hoxton Home,' he continued, "'Stanzas written on the Rhine.'" And he cleared his voice as he began—

"My Hoxton home, upon the Rhine——"

"Well, but Hoxton is not upon the Rhine," interrupted Johnson.

"No, no, Jack; you don't understand; there's a stop after 'home.' I think 'whilst' is better than 'upon.' Now then—

"My Hoxton home! whilst on the Rhine,

A thought of thee my bosom fills;

Its steep recall the mountain line

Of Haverstock and Highgate hills

I gaze upon thy castled crags,

Baronial hall, or lady's bower;

But memory's chain before me drags

Our own dear Canonbury Tower!

In fancy still, where'er I roam,

I think of thee, my Hoxton Home!"

"Capital! famous!" cried Jack, applauding with an empty bottle against the side of the tub. "Is that all?"

"No," said Ledbury; "here's another verse."

"Fire away, then!" said Johnson; "we're all attention." And Mr. Ledbury, encouraged by their praise, continued—

"The Brunnens which in Baden spring,
Their gravell'd walks and flowery paths,
Warm my bosom—"

"Hallo!" interrupted Jack once more; there's a foot too short there!"

"So there is," replied Ledbury, counting his fingers. "What can we put instead?"

"'Corazza' 's a good word," said Jack; "'thrill my corazza' reads well; you can take the shirt as symbolical of the heart it covers."

"Now, come, Jack, you are joking," said Ledbury in continuation.

"This will do:—

"—and flowery paths
Call up in visions, whilst I sing,
The City Sawmills' Tepid Baths.
The eagles in their sky-built nests,
Each guarding his sublime abode,
Boast not the grandeur which invests
The 'Eagle' of the City Road.
Nor pump-room's dome, nor fountain's foam,
Can equal thee, my Hoxton Home!"

"Very good indeed, Leddy," said Jack, patronisingly; "we shall see you publishing now, before long."

"They are simple," said Titus, with becoming modesty.

"Remarkably," answered Johnson, in which opinion the pensive gentleman coincided, although silently.

There was now plenty of fine scenery upon either bank to occupy the attention of the travellers; and it was somewhat laughable to see the eager manner in which those who were taking refreshment below rushed upon deck when any fine view was announced; and, as soon as it was passed, went back quietly to their meal. Mr. Ledbury was principally amused with the manner in which the Rhenish boatmen moved their small craft, which were something between punts and canoes. A man sat at each end with a broad-toothed wooden rake, and as the foremost pulled the water towards him, the hinder one pushed it from him, so that, between the two, the boat made a little progress. The continuity of ruins, also, particularly called forth his admiration; for now the mountains rose up from the very edge of the river, covered at every available spot with vineyards, and in most instances surmounted by the unvarying round tower.

"Those ruins of former feudal times are very interesting," said the pensive gentleman.

"Yes, but they are all alike," replied Jack. "The two tall chimneys at the base of Primrose Hill, and the round shot manufactory at Lambeth, cut up into lengths, and perched on the tops of mountains, would furnish quite as many traditions. They are nearly all the same."

"Would you favour us with one of the legends?" asked the pensive gentleman.

"Certainly," said Jack; "which will you have?"

The choice was left to himself; and as they had not long passed the scene of the story, Jack drew a MS. book from the pocket of his blouse, and commenced his own version of

The Legend of Drachenfels.

A LAY OF THE ANCIENT RHINE.

KING GILIBALDUS sits at lunch beneath the linden trees,
But very nervous doth he seem, with spirits ill at ease;
For first of all he rubs this ear, and then he pulls that hair,
His sandwich and a splendid glass of ale* he cannot bear,
Nor aught beside they can provide, because a monster dread
Has sent to say, without delay, he must the princess wed.
To speak unto his courtiers the monarch does not choose,
Until that monarch has been hung, and they have brought the noose.

The monster is a dragon of more hideous shape and mien
Than any canvas-cover'd, wicker-basket, huge machine,
That Mr. Bradwell ever built at merry Christmas time,
To be put on by Payne or Stilt in some gay pantomime.
A vast aerial courier he—part fish, part beast, part bird,
A flying ichthyosaurus, of which Mantel never heard;
No eye might look upon his form without the deepest awe,
His maw (or craw) for victuals raw, his jaw, and paw, and claw

Sir Siegfried the Sealy, one of stalwart form and height
(In Germany, all through the year, he was the longest knight),
The Nibelungen hero, as some call him, Sea-egg fried,
Of noble fame, set forth to claim the princess for his bride.
He rode beneath proud Stromberg's walls, where Gilibald held state,
And kept up his old mansion at a bountiful old rate;
Or rather at no rate at all, for none would he e'er pay,
But always told the overseer to call another day;
And if the wretched wight return'd, they got him in a line,
Then tied a millstone round his neck, and sent him "down the Rhine."

Sir Siegfried the Sealy played a solo on his horn,
That Puzzi might have envied, but the greeting was forlorn;
For that same morn, at break of dawn, the dragon had been there,
And carried off the princess, as she wait'd to take the air.
He wound his tail about her waist, his tail so large and long,
As restless as repealer Dan's—in mischief quite as strong.
Then, like a rocket shooting up, by dint of magic spells,
He bore her to his mountain-home on craggy Drakenfels.

"Now welcome, brave Sir Siegfried!" King Gilibald did say;
"I am so glad to see you—more especially to-day.
You may command my daughter's hand, and with it half-a-crown,
If you will climb the Drakenfels, and bring her safely down."

The dragon, after dhuing, was indulging in a nap,
His tinsell'd head reclining in the poor princess's lap,
When Siegfried the Sealy, with his good sword Balamung,
Just ground for the occasion, up the rocky mountain sprung;
And for the sword's free use, in troth, there also was just ground,
The dragon long had been the curse of all the country round.

* "Crowlaches Altonisches gutes altes Bier, mit Butterbrod und Fleisch, einen silber groschen." (About fourpence English.)

But now he jump'd upon his feet, awaken'd by the tread,
His nostrils belching out fierce flames, to fill the knight with dread ;
And, but for the opinion that both coarse and low the phrase is,
We might have said Sir Siegfried was going fast to blazes !

But chivalry and might prevail'd ; the dragon soon was slain,
And Siegfried the princess bore to Stromberg back again.
The bells were rung, the mass was sung, and, ere the close of day,
King Gilibaldus to the knight his daughter gave away.
On those wild heights Sir Siegfried his future home did fix,
And there a fortress proud, of stone, he built as right as bricks.
About the ruins which exists each guide his version tells ;
But this is the correct account of castled Drakenfels.

“ Well, but, Jack,” observed Mr. Ledbury, as Johnson finished,
“ all that never happened, you know.”

“ I can't answer for that,” replied Jack ; “ it might or it might not. I have my own opinions about it.”

The pensive gentleman made no comment upon the legend. It was evident that he did not deem it sufficiently romantic to call forth his approbation ; and he gradually sidled off to the after part of the vessel, where the majority of the passengers were dining upon deck under an awning, so that Jack and Ledbury were left alone, with the exception of a facetious traveller, of limited intelligence, who came up to them every five minutes, smiling and rubbing his hands, and, after looking amicably at Jack for a few seconds, generally said—

“ Well, how do you find yourself by this time ? ”

To which kind inquiry Jack, who had not been particularly indisposed in the interim, usually replied that he was as well as could be expected, which the traveller appeared to consider a high joke, judging from the sportive manner in which he received the intelligence. Titus, who imagined that he had attracted the attention of a fashionable lady on the box of one of the carriages, assumed several elegant positions, in which he thought his figure might be seen to the best advantage, and even went so far as to call out audibly to the waiter, in German, for another *demi-bouteille* of wine. But in this daring feat he was somewhat discouraged by Jack Johnson, who recommended him not to try it again, for fear he should tie his tongue in a knot and experience some difficulty in undoing it again.

The poetical associations of the river had not affected the corporeal appetites of the passengers, who all appeared to be making excellent dinners, as they admired the succession of vineyards and cornfields, orchards and villages, frowning mountains, and fertile plains, that quickly followed each other, now smiling in the afternoon sun. Then some of the restraint which had attended the early part of the voyage wore away, and the various travellers began to compare notes of their intended routes with each other, or tell anecdotes of former excursions. Altogether, the time passed as pleasantly as well might be, until a bend of the river brought them within sight of the tremendous bulwark of the Rhine, towering formidably above all around it ; and in another twenty minutes the *Königin Victoria* came up alongside the busy landing-quay of double-faced Coblenz, which smiles on the river and frowns on the land with equal significance.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE GALLANT MANNER IN WHICH MR. LEDBURY ATTACKED THE
FORTRESS OF EHRENBREITSTEIN.

It is a very animated scene when the steamers discharge their passengers upon the landing-place at Coblenz : and not the least amusing part of it is the struggle of the touters belonging to the various inns to attract the attention of the visitors, in common with those of all foreign show-places, as well as the exertions of different porters to seize upon the respective luggage ; for there is always a perfect stack of gay carpet-bags, worked all over with Berlin wool, on board the Rhenish boats, which require transportation to the various destinations of their owners.

A powerful band of these licensed brigands took possession of the gangway as the boat came alongside the pier ; and before long Mr. Ledbury was engaged in a terrific single-handed combat with a German *gamin*, who insisted upon forcibly carrying off his knapsack. The contest was very severe whilst it lasted ; but at length Titus gained the victory, and marched up the platform leading to the quay, with the air of a Peruvian Rolla, in a mackintosh cape and spectacles, flourishing his luggage in triumph over his head, in the place of the sacred infant who usually personates Cora's child. Jack Johnson followed, laughing heartily at his friend's encounter, and keeping off the other bandits with his stick ; whilst the pensive gentleman gave up his effects at once, without a struggle, and accompanied the others to land.

They went directly to the Hôtel du Géant ; but, finding it was quite full, proceeded along the street in search of another.

"What a curious name for an inn !" said the pensive gentleman.

"It is christened after a legend," replied Jack. "Some centuries ago a giant lived in that very house. Ehrenbreitstein was built to attack him."

"Indeed !" said the other, as he peeped through the open windows of one of the *salons*, with an air of deep interest. "The rooms are not very large, though."

"The house was not divided into apartments when he lived there," said Jack. "He used to sit with his head out of the skylight, putting his arms and legs through the windows, like the little men outside shows. They say that is the bell he used to ring when he was hungry."

The poetical stranger immediately stopped to make a sketch of the packet-bell, to which Jack had pointed ; and at this occupation the others, finding that he intended to write a sonnet upon Ehrenbreitstein before he dined, left him, and turned into the open portals of the *Gasthaus Zum Rheinberg*. And having made their dinner-toilet, which consisted in brushing their hair and taking off their blouses, they were

soon seated at one of the pleasant windows of that inn, before a well-spread table, and enjoying a beautiful view of the Rhine and its opposite banks.

The iced hock was so delicious, and so much to Mr. Ledbury's taste, that his poetical inspirations soon returned, and he would have perpetrated several "Stanzas upon a Dinner on the Rhine" if his companion had not continually broken in upon his romantic meditations with some every-day remark. As it was, he began to ask Jack if there was any chance of the glow-worm gilding the elfin flower that evening, since he felt very desirous of wandering on the banks of the blue Moselle, beneath the starry light of a summer's night. And, after the second bottle, he went so far as to contemplate sitting upon the banks of the river above the town all night long, in order that if any relation of Lurline felt inclined to take him to her home beneath the water, he might accompany her; for which sub-aqueous trip he felt perfectly qualified, having formerly subscribed to Peerless Pool, in his native Islington, as well as been down twice in the diving-bell at the Polytechnic Institution, not so much for the actual pleasure he derived from having the drums of his ears tuned during the excursion, as to distinguish himself in the eyes of the company assembled in the galleries when he came up again.

They had been some time at dinner, so long that the moon was beginning to give the sun a mild notice it was time for him to quit, by just showing her face above the mountains, when they heard the sound of music in the street, and directly afterwards a girl with a guitar made her appearance at the open window. She was very pretty, with a slighter figure, and darker hair and eyes, than is common amongst the German women; and she gazed upon Mr. Ledbury with such a captivating expression of her full lustrous pupil, rendered more bewitching by its dilatation in the twilight, that he was almost in doubt whether one of the *naiades* he had been thinking about had not risen from the Rhine to meet him. Nor was the enchantment at all dispelled when she began to sing, with a clear melodious voice, some popular German air, accompanying herself on the guitar, and, what was more extraordinary, with English words, in which, however, a foreign accent was perceptible. This was too much for Mr. Ledbury, who was always keenly alive to the power of female loveliness, and his spectacled eyes twinkled through the smoke of his pipe with the deepest sentiment, until, with the combined efforts of the hock, the moon, and the music, he put it beyond all question that some baron's daughter upon the Rhine had fallen in love with him, as she saw him pass in the steamer from her father's castle, and had taken this method of disclosing her attachment. With this impression he was somewhat surprised when, upon the conclusion of the song, the girl came close up to the window, and said in a subdued mysterious tone—

"Does Monsieur wish to buy any fine eau de Cologne or cigars?"

"None, my love," replied Jack in a very off-hand manner, as he produced a full tobacco-bag, in size somewhat less than a carpet-bag.

"Any gloves, brooches, *kirschwasser*?" again asked the singer.

"No, no, you gipsy, none!" returned Jack. "There, run along," he continued, throwing her some small coin; "go on to the 'Géant.' They have no end of travellers there, and all English—think of that!"

As the girl smiled at Johnson, and withdrew, Mr. Ledbury's face crimsoned with shame and confusion at the very unceremonious manner in which he imagined she had been treated by his friend. For he had imagined that her appeal to his commercial generosity was a delicate *ruse* to obtain an interview; and when he saw Jack answer her in such an unconcerned manner, and gave her such a trifling amount of coin, he felt assured that her feelings were deeply hurt, and that she had left in painful humility. So, without saying a word, he started up from the table, and hurrying out of the room with a precipitation which at first gave the people of the hotel some slight reason for thinking that his ideas of payment for what he had regaled upon were rather indistinct, he followed the fair *minnesinger*, whom he overtook just as she was entering the adjacent hotel, leaving Jack Johnson completely amazed at his excitement. But the spirit of chivalry held an equal sway over Mr. Ledbury's actions with the spirit of wine; and the combination of the two, acting upon his natural bland and gentle idiosyncrasy, led him to the commission of most of those daring feats of benevolent gallantry which it has been our happy lot to chronicle.

He returned in a minute or two in a very volcanic state, with his head looking as if it only wanted a knock to make it go off with a bang, like a detonating ball, and evidently upon the point of communicating some most important fact to his friend, as he exclaimed—

"I say, Jack; what do you think?"

"Well, I can't say," replied Johnson; "what is it?"

"She has promised," said Mr. Ledbury, impressively, "to sell me—"

"I don't doubt it," interrupted Johnson.

"Now, Jack, you always make such fun of things! She has promised to sell me some real eau de Cologne at half-price, if I will go for it after dark; and where to, do you suppose?"

"I don't know," said Jack; "perhaps where glory waits thee, or to Bath."

"No, no," replied Titus, half vexed; "she will meet me—there!"

And with a very melodramatic expression he pointed to the opposite side of the river, where the mighty batteries were snarling from the mountain, adding heroically—

"There! in the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein!"

"Why, you are cracked, Leddy," said Johnson; "what are you talking about? You are not going anywhere, surely?"

"Of course I am," returned Mr. Ledbury, somewhat offended. "Think of the romance of the adventure—an appointment on the Rhine, and at Ehrenbreitstein! It's beautiful! I shall go, and you shall accompany me."

Johnson replied—

“If I do I’m——”—and here he hesitated an instant—“I’m only anxious to see that you get into no scrape. I think you had better not go.”

“Excuse me, Jack,” answered Titus. “I would not lose the adventure for the world, and you shall share it.”

And Jack, in return, seeing that his friend was bent upon doing something foolish, from which nothing would turn him, consented to accompany him; then, having finished their wine, they strolled towards the Moselle Bridge, and hiring a small boat, amused themselves with rowing about the river, as well as they were able with the rude oars, until the time which Mr. Ledbury had fixed for his appointment.

At length the last glow of sunset, which had long lingered on the horizon, faded away behind the purple hills, and darkness crept over the Rhine. Lights appeared in the windows of the town, as well as in some of the lazy craft that were lying against the quays, the reflection quivering in long vivid lines upon the tranquil river. Everything was hushed and silent, except the occasional roll of drums upon the opposite side, or the cry of warning from the boatman as he guided his apparently endless raft of wood down the stream.

“I think we will go now,” said Mr. Ledbury; “it is about the time. We can pull across, and that will save us going round by the bridge of boats.”

Resolved to humour him in whatever he wished, Jack followed all his directions, and in a few minutes their craft touched the foot of the mountain on the other side, immediately under the fortress. Possibly, at this minute, if Johnson had proposed to return, Mr. Ledbury would have offered no opposition, but, as it was, he stepped on shore with an air of great bravery.

“I know where to go,” said Titus. “She told me I should see a light in one of the windows of the battlements.”

“Now, don’t be a fool, Leddy, and spend all your money in trash,” courteously observed his friend.

“No, no, Jack. You had better wait here to mind the boat. Good-bye—I shan’t be long.”

And beginning to ascend the bank, which at this precise spot rose rather abruptly from the water, Mr. Ledbury contrived to whistle some random notes of an impromptu air, indicative of determination and the absence of fear, whilst Jack sat down quietly in the boat wondering what Titus intended doing, to await his return.

There was very little light to enable him to see his way clearly, but Mr. Ledbury, sustaining himself by the idea that he was a spirited young traveller carrying out an adventure of gallantry, scrambled up the mountain immediately under the fortified walls, towards where he imagined the beacon was shining for his guidance. Now and then, to be sure, he felt slightly nervous, in spite of all his romance, as he heard the passing tread of the sentinel upon the ramparts over his head, or found himself unexpectedly in the exact line of some mighty piece of ordnance that bristled from the battlements; but he soon got

beyond these, going higher and higher, until he looked down upon the lamps of Coblenz and its opposite suburb, far beneath him, and glistening in the river.

At last he came to the window, or rather the glazed embrasure at which, to all appearances the fair contrabandist was to meet him. As he listened intently, he could plainly hear the notes of a guitar in the interior of the building, which was a small fort, connecting two curtains of the works. But he would not trust himself to make any vocal sign, so he scraped together a handful of dust, and threw it against the window, which was a little higher than his head. There was no reply, nor did the music cease, and Mr. Ledbury, thinking his projectile was not forcible enough, collected a few small pebbles, and again cast them at the pane, one of somewhat larger dimensions than the rest being included by mistake in the handful, which immediately cracked the glass. But the attempt had succeeded, for the guitar was suddenly hushed, and a shadow passed quickly across the window.

"She comes!" thought Titus, approaching closer to the window by climbing up the steep slope of turf that led to it. And placing both his hands upon the sill, he raised his head to a level with the glass, when the casement opened, and he found himself face to face, not with the lady-minstrel he had expected, but a gaunt Prussian soldier, of terrific aspect and cast-iron visage, who savagely demanded in German, "Who went there?"

It needed no effort of volition on the part of Mr. Ledbury to loose his hold of the sill, for he dropped down the instant his gaze encountered that of the terrible stranger as if he had been shot; and coming upon the slanting bank, of course lost his footing as well, and bundled down into the pathway. The sentinel, who ought to have been upon guard outside the building, but had been attracted by the music of the guitar-girl—for she was there, belonging in reality to the canteen—in the surprise of the instant, and before anything could be explained, seized his firelock, and discharged it out of the window to give the alarm, not knowing but that Mr. Ledbury might be the chief of some revolutionary party intending to attack the fortress. Titus who expected nothing of a milder character than the simultaneous explosion of fifty mines immediately beneath him, started up at the report; and as it was answered from above, set off down the steep track as fast as his long legs would carry him. But, had a chain of wires connected everybody in the fortress with a voltaic battery, the alarm could not have been more sudden and general; for before the echoes of the first gun had well died away, a roll of drums broke out, apparently from every direction at once, beating an alarm; and a confusion of hoarse and awful challenges rang from every angle of the fortifications.

On went Mr. Ledbury, like an avalanche, driving the gravel before him with his heels, until the big stones bounded down the hill, bringing fifty others along with them, which increased the general clatter. On he went, taking such strides that those remarkable boots of the fairy chronicles would have dwindled into ordinary highlows by

comparison ; and onward, to all appearance directly at his heels came the tumult after him. In what direction he was flying he had not the least shade of an idea—he only knew that he was going down the mountain, and that the descent must eventually lead him to the river.

Which it did most literally. The distance was nearly accomplished, and ten strides more would have brought him to the bottom of the hill, when a tuft of turf, upon which he placed his foot, gave way beneath him, and he was directly thrown off his legs. But this did not arrest his progress, for the declivity was very rapid ; and after sliding a short distance upon his back, he began to roll head over heels down the slope with a fearful velocity that no living clown could have contested in the most bustling physical pantomime ever put upon the stage. Every effort to stop his course was in vain. He went on, turning all ways at once, like a roulette ball, until the last piece of ground was cleared, and, with a final wild clutch at nothing, he threw a concluding somersault, and plunged into the dark cold waters of the Rhine, which roared in his ears with deafening riot as he sank directly to the very bottom of the river—a matter of six or seven feet in depth.

He never knew precisely what followed ; but, adapting a favourite passage from various novelists whose works he had read, he was heard to say, “that it was one of those moments when the sensations of years are concentrated into the intensity of a single second.” Jack Johnson, upon the very first alarm, had pushed the boat just away from the shore, to be ready for a start ; and to one of the rakes used to propel it was Titus principally indebted for his preservation—being fished up thereby almost as soon as he touched the water, for he had luckily fallen in close to the spot he started from.

They immediately crossed the river, and succeeded in landing quietly at the foot of the Moselle Bridge, whilst the alarms were still rapidly following one another at the fortress. As the distance increased between the scene of tumult and themselves, Mr. Ledbury somewhat regained his intellects, and considering a good retreat next to a downright victory, almost imagined that he had been performing a glorious feat of courageous enterprise. As soon as they touched the opposite shore, they settled for the craft with the owner, who had been waiting about some little time to receive them ; and then, for fear Mr. Ledbury’s saturated appearance should attract the attention of the bystanders who were now thronging the quays and discussing the probable cause of the excitement at Ehrenbreitstein, they returned directly to their hotel. Here Titus immediately proceeded to his sleeping apartment, and went to bed, leaving Jack to superintend the drying of his garments—the knapsack not allowing an entire change of clothes—which duty his friend divided with paying compliments to the Pretty French *soubrette* of a family that was staying in the house, and learning from the cook the best way of dressing *pommes de terre frites*, in which he intended to instruct Emma on his return, and give old Mr. Ledbury reason to imagine that he was of a domestic turn of mind.

To avoid all unpleasantry, and perhaps detention, they determined

to leave Coblenz early the next morning. And Titus also made a resolve not to have anything more to say to singing smugglers of the softer sex, although his first adventure with one had terminated by convincing him of a fact upon which he had previously entertained some doubts: and this was, that the bottom of the Rhine is not a world of crystal caves and lovely nymphs, as legends had heretofore taught him to believe; but rather a bed of black mud, relieved by mosaics of old shoes and dilapidated pipkins.

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CHAPTER XLIX.

MR. DE ROBINSON JUNIOR HAS AN INTERVIEW WITH MR. PRODGERS.

EVERYTHING in London indicated that the train of gaiety which had characterised the last four months was rapidly approaching its terminus, and the close of the season was arriving. One by one the shutters closed their gilded panels upon the drawing-rooms of the far-west dwellings, and the blinds were enveloped in aged copies of the morning newspapers. The Opera advertised its last night, and then its stars dispersed to all points of the compass, wherever the engagements chanced to be most magnetic, whilst the foreign gentlemen forsook the glowing pavements of Regent Street and Leicester Square for the unknown haunts of northern suburbs, wherein they put off the toilet of display for the costume of obligation, reversing the order of entomological existence, and changing at once from the butterfly to the grub.

The chain of society was now broken, and its limbs scattered far and wide. The inhabitants of Belgrave Square removed to Florence and Naples, whilst those of Finsbury Circus sought the lodgings and *pensions* of Margate or Boulogne. The moors, the lakes, the vineyards, and the glaziers each found their visitors; some retired to their own country residences; others hired cottages on a line of railway. Lower down in the school of migration, people wishing to be "out of town"—an indefinite locality, which answers equally as well to Rome as Ramsgate—took simple lodgings within the transit of an omnibus; and even melting clerks, who knew not what a long vacation meant, after being caged from ten to four in some dark office of the city lanes, hopped from their perches as the clock struck the looked-for hour, and rushed to the terminus of the Blackwall Railway, where plenty of rope was allowed them to arrive at Brunswick Wharf in time for a Gravesend steamer, that should at last deposit them upon the welcome piers of Terrace, Town, or Rosherville.

Of course the De Robinsons, of Eaton Place, were amongst the first to leave London; not so much from want of change, or because they liked the country, as for the reason that other people did so. Mr. De Robinson was a fashionable lawyer; and, according to the usual custom of lawyers, from the day when that celebrated member of the profession—albeit an anonymous one—swallowed the oyster which his clients were contending for, was now benefiting himself by the disputes of others. For whilst two of his employers were waiting for his decision respecting a furnished cottage, situated in Chancery and Surrey, he thought the best thing that could be done was for his family to inhabit it themselves, by which means everything would be nicely taken care of, and kept well aired. And so, although Mrs. De Robinson and her daughter talked much of Wiesbaden, and more about Interlachen, they found economy finally triumph over inclination, and their Continental dreams awaken to the realities of a country villa-residence on the banks of the Thames, within a lunch-and-dinner-*entr'acte* drive of Clumpley. And here, after some little demur, they finally settled—young De Robinson coming to the conclusion that it was not so bad after all, because, being upon the river, he could invite those of the Leander men whom he knew to pull up and see him.

Their family circle was also increased by Mrs. De Robinson's aunt, Mrs. Waddleston, who was staying for a short period with them. She was a very remarkable personage, and almost tempted one to believe in the existence of cast-iron old ladies, so tough and healthy was her constitution. She had no fixed place of residence, but lived chiefly in steam-boats, first-class carriages, and hotels, occasionally staying with her friends, and sometimes disappearing from their eyes for months together; after which she would once more become visible, and exhibit curiosities that she had brought from the Pyrenees or Norway, as well as having been half-way to the top of Mont Blanc, in Savoy, and very nearly to the bottom of the coal-mines at Whitehaven. She knew the Red Book by heart, and the genealogy of almost every person who had one in the Court Guide, and was upon speaking terms with several great people, which made the De Robinsons pay her every attention. But besides this, she was very well off, which chiefly accounted for her independence, keeping her carriage independently of her travelling, and never paying taxes for it, although the collectors were constantly dodging her about all over the United Kingdom, to see where she lived, without ever finding out. And, above all, having no relatives so near as the De Robinsons, who expected to receive all her property, they evinced their gratitude in anticipation by the most affectionate devotion—listening to all her long stories, and admiring everything she proposed.

They had been settled some weeks, and everybody had called upon them—the medical legion of the neighbourhood being, of course, the first to leave their cards, then the petty gentilities, and lastly the cautious ones, who hung back from making any advances towards familiarity until they saw who and what the new-comers were—when Mrs. De

Robinson thought it was time to return the numerous invitations with which they had been favoured. As the cottage was comparatively a small one, a set evening party was out of the question, and it was therefore arranged that they should give a *fête champêtre* in the grounds, which were tolerably extensive, when many more guests could be accommodated. And there were a great many to be asked, their connections being already very extensive, since nobodies in town became very great people in the country. We do not mean to say exactly that the De Robinsons were nobodies, for their connections were respectable, and people knew their relations; but they were nothing beyond the common sphere of middling London society, although they tried very hard to soar above it; but this is seldom a profitable task, for, Icarus-like, the nearer the pseudo-votaries of fashion approach the sun, the more treacherous does the wax become that constitutes the body of their wings, and when the fall does take place, it is sudden and violent indeed.

Invitations are not often refused in the country, and nearly everybody accepted, including Mrs. Ledbury and Emma, who were both at Clumpley, and were to be driven over by Mr. John Wilmer. And then it became incumbent upon the De Robinsons to lay down some schemes for the amusement of their guests, at which council all the family assisted, including Mrs. Waddleston.

"Of course there must be Chinese lamps and fireworks," observed the old lady authoritatively. "Lord Fulham always has lamps and fireworks."

"Oh! fireworks, of course," said young De Robinson; "and, I should say, ballet-girls."

"Eustace!" exclaimed Mrs. Waddleston, in tones of amazement, "what are you talking about?"

"I know, aunt," replied the young gentleman: "'groups of *ballerine* to promenade the grounds,' as they used to say in the bills of the Vauxhall masquerades; you never saw them, though, when you got in. I beg your pardon for the interruption."

"I do not see the policy of having any young dancing females," said Mrs. De Robinson.

"But you *must* have some strange people dispersed about," replied her son. "It will be very flat if you do not."

"Yes; there you are right," observed Mrs. Waddleston. "When I was at the *fête* given at the Countess Pigeoni's, several wonderful characters were engaged. I remember there was a wizard, who conjured all the plate from the table in the marquee."

"The difficulty is to find out where these individuals live," said Mrs. De Robinson.

"Not at all, mother," returned Eustace. "John Barnard told me that he knows a friend of young Ledbury's, named Johnson, who is up to everything of this kind. Suppose I apply to him?"

As Mrs. Waddleston appeared to think this a good plan, of course her relations were immediately delighted with it; and it was therefore agreed that Eustace should proceed to London the following morning to order fireworks, bring down various things from the town

house, and, having got Mr. Johnson's address, to make arrangements for the ensuing entertainments.

The next day, at noon, Mr. De Robinson junior was threading the, to him, wild regions of Clerkenwell; and, by dint of much patient investigation and inquiries, at last entered the street which had been whilom graced by the medical establishment of Mr. Rawkins. But the name was gone; and, after walking several times backwards and forwards in much uncertainty, he thought it best to apply at the only doctor's shop he saw in the thoroughfare, which he accordingly entered for that purpose.

A small, ill-clad urchin, wearing an enormous coat, the tails of which trailed far away upon the ground behind him, like the train of a state-robe and upon whose face inferences of hunger and evidences of dirt might be found in equal proportions, had been apparently putting up screws of Epsom salts in blue paper, but was now taking a little relaxation by dancing Jim-along-Josey behind the counter. To judge from the surprise which he exhibited as the visitor entered, and the sudden check that his operatic ballet received, it was not often that the surgery was troubled with patients.

"Can you tell me where Mr. Rawkins lives?" inquired Mr. De Robinson.

"Wishes I could neither," was the reply of Bob; for it was indeed the small assistant. "He ran away two months ago."

"Oh!" said Mr. De Robinson, taking a minim rest. "And where's Mr. Johnson?"

"He's gone too. I think it's athurt the Ingies; leastwise I don't know."

Well, thought the visitor, there does not appear to be much information to be got here. "Can you tell me where I can see anybody who knows Mr. Johnson?" he continued, once more addressing Bob.

"Mr. Prodgers."

"And where is he?"

"He went to the mill yesterday with Chorkey—he's a-grinding to-day."

Not exactly comprehending under what particular category these occupations would fall, Mr. De Robinson was compelled to elaborate his inquiries, by which process he finally learnt that Mr. Prodgers was "grinding" for his examination, and he also ascertained the place of his abode, towards which he now proceeded.

The residence which Mr. Prodgers shared with several of his fellow-pupils was situated in a small street lying somewhere between Burton Crescent and Gray's Inn Road, of a modest and unassuming appearance, with a triad of names upon the door-post, surmounted by bell knobs, and a scutcheonless hole for a latch-key in the door, which bespoke, by its worn and dilated aperture, the late hours kept out of the house by the inmates. It was a little time before Mr. De Robinson's knock was answered; but at last he contrived to be let in by somebody who chanced to be coming out, and by their direction mounted to the top storey, finding there was nobody to take up his card. But on entering the room, which bore undeniable traces of

pertaining to a student of the healing art, he was surprised to find it unoccupied, although several hats were lying about, which gave evidence that the lodgers might still be upon the premises, since the general appointments did not harmonise with the idea of a plurality of gossamers. He was about returning to make additional inquiries, when, upon passing the door of the bedroom, a strain of indistinct melody fell upon his ear and caused him to stop. The door was open, and upon looking in, he perceived a table in the middle of the room, upon which was placed a deal box, the structure evidently forming the approach to an open trap door in the ceiling, down which the harmony proceeded. To Mr. De Robinson's West End ideas, all the arrangements betokened rather a singular style of receiving visitors; but as there was no other plan left, he climbed up the rather treacherous elevation, and put his head through the aperture, to see what was going on.

Upon the level part of the house-top, between the slopes of the roof, three or four gentlemen were assembled in great conviviality and costumes of striking ease and negligence, apparently combining, from the evidences that were scattered about, the study of anatomy with the discussion of the "commingled." Higher up, and prevented from sliding down the slant of the roof by getting behind a chimney, was Mr. Prodgers, at this precise moment superintending the elevation of something important from the ground below, which was also attracting the attention of the others, so that they did not at first see the new-comer. But when the object of their solicitude, which proved to be a large can, was landed upon the coping, Mr. Prodgers turned his head, and observed Mr. De Robinson half-way through the trap.

"How d'ye do, sir?" said Mr. Prodgers, with great *bonhomie* and open-heartedness. "Who are you?"

The visitor was somewhat taken aback by this off-hand question, which did not exactly accord with his own notions of etiquette; but he thought it best to be very polite, so he answered—

"I wished to see Mr. Prodgers. I fear I am intruding."

"Not at all, sir—not at all," returned the other. "Give me your hand. Now then—up—there you are!"

And thus speaking, he half assisted, half dragged, Mr. De Robinson through the aperture, who had some difficulty in keeping his footing upon the level of the roof; but as soon as he felt safe, observed—

"I took the liberty of calling upon you to know if you could tell me anything of Mr. Johnson; my name is De Robinson."

"Oh!—you are a friend of Ledbury's—very glad to see you. These fellows' names are Tweak—that's Tweak in the gutter—and Simmons, and Simmons's brother, and Whitby. I'm Prodgers; and now we all know one another, have some beer."

As Mr. Prodgers spoke, he handed the can containing the "commingled" to Mr. De Robinson. But as that gentleman seldom drank malt liquor, except sometimes mixed with ginger-beer, when he was with some of the Leander men on the river, he politely refused it.

"Perhaps I may offer you some wine," said Mr. Prodgers.

"Would you like a glass of cool claret—sherry—madeira?"

"Thank you—no," replied the visitor.

"Well, that is fortunate," resumed Mr. Prodgers, "because we haven't got any, only it is right to ask. You'll excuse our free-and-easy manner—it's our way."

Mr. De Robinson bowed in token of acquiescence.

"By the way, I remember," continued Mr. Prodgers, speaking with the air of a connoisseur in wines, "I have a glass of fine old Cape downstairs: a dry, fruity wine, that has been three weeks in bottle—may I offer you that?"

"You are very polite," said Mr. De Robinson faintly smiling. "I never drink Cape."

"We do now and then," said Mr. Prodgers; "fifteen shillings a dozen. Cape of Good Hope we call it, because it may be better some day. I wish you would have some beer."

Thinking it best to accede to his wish, Mr. De Robinson took the proffered pewter, and bowing to the company, put his lips to it.

"This is a remarkably singular spot to meet in," said he, as he finished.

"Ah! you are not used to being on the tiles," said Mr. Prodgers; "we are. We all live on the top floors in this row, and so we get together here by the copings. It's more convenient than going down into the street, and up again, and saves coats."

Mr. De Robinson looked at the costume of his new acquaintances, and agreed with Mr. Prodgers. For their *tourneur* formed a strong contrast to his own, in his low shirt-collar, thin boots, attenuated neckerchief, and lavender gloves.

"Jack's gone abroad with Ledbury," said Mr. Prodgers. "But if you will tell me what you wanted with him, perhaps I can do as well—unless you have come to hunt up tin," he added, after an instant's pause.

"Oh no; nothing of that kind," said Mr. De Robinson. "The fact is, my mother is about giving a *fête* at Clerwell, and we heard that Mr. Johnson could put us in the way of hiring some persons to assist at it."

"What? sham servants, greengrocers, milkmen—"

"No, no," interrupted the other; "queer people to exhibit."

"I see," said Mr. Prodgers; "what they call *artistes*?"

"I have it," exclaimed Mr. Tweak, with the energy of inspiration. "There's a man in the accident-ward at the Middlesex who was once a 'Whirlwind of the Wilderness' in some travelling circus, and afterwards a cab-driver. He's up to all those dodges."

This appeared such an eligible opportunity of obtaining the desired information, that Mr. De Robinson immediately requested Tweak to be kind enough to interest himself in it. And, at the same time, he begged to offer the present company generally an invitation to the *fête*, should they think it worth coming so far to attend.

Mr. Simmons and his brother, who were going up to "the Hall" next week, tendered a polite refusal, which did not altogether grieve

Mr. De Robinson as they were not exactly *fête* men; but Prodgers and Tweak, who had still two months' grace before they underwent the ordeal, accepted the invitation at once, and promised to do all in their power to rout up some marvellous assistants, at the least possible outlay. And then, after their visitor had remained a short time with them, for the sake of appearances, so as not to have the look of going away as soon as he had got all that was wanted, he took his leave; being once more assisted through the trap, and even escorted down to the street-door by Mr. Tweak, with very great courtesy.

"I tell you what, Tweak," said Mr. Prodgers, as his friend returned, "I can see there is a great deal of fun to be got out of this trip. Let the 'commingled' circulate."

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CHAPTER L.

THE CARAVAN OF WONDERS SETS OUT FOR CLUMPLEY.

VERY early the next morning Mr. Prodgers and his fellow student sought the bedside of the "Whirlwind of the Wilderness," in the ward of the hospital, in the hopes of obtaining information relative to the usual haunts and habits of such wonderful people as might be thought eligible to assist at the *fête*. The man, now laid up with a broken arm, had been successively a Bounding Bedouin, a Styrian Stunner, a Chinese Convolutionist, and other surprising foreigners, and was quite calculated to tell them all they wished, as well as to put them up to what he thought would be the lowest rates of engagement. And so industrious were the *entrepreneurs*, acting upon his suggestions, that, after diving into strange localities, which none but policemen, and medical students accustomed to out-door obstetric practice in low neighbourhoods, would ever have invaded, they got together three wonderful men, who could throw fifty consecutive somersaults, stand upon each other's heads, and tie themselves in double-knots; as well as a Wizard of the Nor-nor-west, who borrowed sixpences from the crowd, put them in his eyes, made them come out at his ears, and finally lost them altogether beyond recovery. Mr. Prodgers captured a Fantoccini which he saw exhibiting at Clerkenwell Green; and Mr. Tweak, in one of his nocturnal meanderings amongst different taverns, engaged a gifted foreigner, who imitated skylarks, sang curious airs, played the trombone upon a broomstick, and did various other amazing things, too numerous to be expressed in the limits of any handbill. And then, as these natural curiosities had to be transported carriage free to Clumpley, the next question was, how they were to go. To effect this, Mr. Prodgers struck out a bold scheme to

be pursued, which none but himself or Jack Johnson would have hit upon.

Unaided, and alone, he sought the distant regions of St. George's Fields, and there, at the end of the Westminster Road, in a colony appropriated by pyrotechnists, spring-vans, and philanthropical institutions, he hired a vehicle ; for in such districts are they to be found. It was not a common van or waggon, but a regular downright travelling show, chastely painted externally red and yellow, picked out with green, and fitted up within in a style of the greatest convenience. There was a brass fireplace in the corner ; lockers all round the sides, to keep snakes in, and for the spectators to sit upon ; a sliding trap in the roof, to let the air in or out, as might seem advisable ; and a grand chintz curtain to draw across the apartment, and veil the mysteries of the exhibition from curious eyes. He next sought out the man who had taken "The Tourniquets" to Ascot, and stipulated with him for a pair of horses, and his own services as driver ; and finally returned in high feather to tell Mr. Tweak what he had done, proposing that when they had collected their troupe, they should leave London the day before the *fête*, and work their way down, stopping to exhibit wherever it seemed desirable.

"Why, you don't mean to say you are going to keep a show?" exclaimed Tweak, in the amazement of the first disclosure.

"To be sure I do," replied Prodgers ; "it will be the greatest dodge ever contrived. Nobody knows us on the road, and we may pick up some tin !"

Mr. Tweak, truth to say, did not see his way very clearly ; but his friend appeared in such high spirits about the certain success of the speculation that he promised to say or do anything he was told, provided he was not expected to tumble on the platform outside.

The intermediate time passed in plans and preparations for the journey, and at last the important day arrived. At an early hour Mr. Prodgers had collected his forces over the water, in the neighbourhood of the place from which he had hired the caravan. They were all punctual, except the two professional gentlemen attached to the fantoccini ; and they had preferred doing a little upon their own account down the road, for which purpose they had started very soon that morning. But this had been done by permission of Mr. Prodgers, who began to assume the air of a theatrical lessee ; and with the express understanding that they were to rejoin the caravan at a particular spot, because the drum and pandean pipes constituted their sole band, and were essentially necessary to the undertaking.

Last of all, Mr. Prodgers hired, in addition to the caravan, a speaking trumpet of unearthly proportions, and two enormous pictures of fat girls and boa-constrictors, to be hoisted up in front, which he said resembled a real travelling exhibition, the more from having nothing in the world to do with what was inside. And then, mentally vowing to discard every thought of Apothecaries' Hall, hæmoptysis, and the decompositions of the Pharmacopœia, from his brain for three days, he begged Tweak to do the same ; and forth they started in the highest spirits, one thing alone tending to lessen their hilarity, and this was

that Jack Johnson and good humoured Mr. Ledbury were not of the party.

The three wonderful men who could tie themselves in knots, and who termed themselves the "Children of Caucasus," set off first, preferring to walk and smoke short pipes, having put their bundles in the lockers. On the box of the caravan were seated the driver, who had orders not to go more than five miles an hour, and at his side the foreign siffleur, who kept him in one continuous trance of admiration by gratuitous specimens of his ability. Inside were Mr. Prodgers and Mr. Tweak, sitting with the door open, that they might see the country as they lumbered on; and behind the curtain was the Wizard, who had partially shut himself up to arrange some of his wonderful deceptions, which being finished, he came and joined the other two; whilst on either side was an attendance of little boys, who ran by the show out of London, in the hope of peeping into the interior; sometimes producing a little temporary excitement by turning over upon their hands and legs like wheels—it might be in the idea of getting an engagement—or pitching one another's caps, when they had them, through the open windows or on to the roof of the caravan. And in this fashion they progressed along the Kennington Road, and finally arrived at Wandsworth, where the horses rested for a short time.

"Well, Mr. Crindle, have you arranged all your traps to your satisfaction?" said Mr. Crindle. Prodgers to the Wizard, as he joined them.

"Quite right, sir, and ready for anything," was the reply of the necromancer, who, out of his magic garments, looked somewhat between an actor and a butler out of place.

"What are you going to do with that barley, Crindle?" asked Mr. Tweak.

"That's for the Well of Diogenes," replied the Wizard, majestically. "It's a fine art, conjuring is, ain't it, sir?"

"Uncommon!" answered Prodgers, drawing a congrave along the sole of his shoe; "so's cock-fighting and the cold water cure."

"But, as I told the gent the other day, it ain't thought enough of," continued the Wizard Crindle, who was evidently an enthusiast. "It's the patients that burke it. Shakespeare's all very well in his way; but he couldn't do the doll-trick. What's Macbeth to the pancake done in the hat, or the money in the sugar-basin? Answer me that, now—what's Macbeth to them?"

"Oh, nothing," replied Mr. Tweak; "a great do."

"Of course," observed the Wizard; "but Shakespeare's going down, sir; he's not the card he used to be; the people begin to cut him, and he'll be at the bottom of the middle pack before long. Then they'll do the legitimate thing, and no mistake."

"Have you been a conjurer long?" inquired Mr. Tweak.

"A necromancer, sir, all my life," was the answer, "and my father before me; only he came the common hanky-panky line more than the high delusions. I may say that I was born with a pack of cards in my hand."

"What an interesting case to have attended!" observed Mr. Prodgers over his pipe. "Are those the identicals?"

“One of those remarkable anomalies of nature which are ever rising to perplex the physiologist,” remarked Mr. Tweak, gravely, and quoting from one of his lectures. “I should say those cards were worth any money for a museum.”

“No, sir,—about fifteen pence,” answered the Wizard, innocently, whilst he pinched the cards together, and then made them fly from his hand, one after the other, to different parts of the interior.

The caravan went leisurely on, now creeping up a steep hill, anon winding round the boundaries of a park, and then turning off from the highway into some fresh green lane, between fields where the yellow sheaves of corn were drying in the sun, or being carted in creaking waggons to the homestead. Mr. Tweak, at every town they arrived at, was nervously anxious to begin their exhibition; but Prodgers said that they were not yet far enough away from the metropolis to unfold their wonders to the public. They stopped at Kingston to lunch, where they also took up the fantoccini men and their company of flexible puppets; and then crossing the Thames and passing Hampton Court, finally arrived at the first of those pleasant fishing villages which border the Thames beyond this place, at one of which Mr. Prodgers determined to make his first appearance upon any show in the character of its master.

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CHAPTER LI.

THE RESULT OF MR. PRODGERS' ITINERANT SPECULATION.

IT was a fine bright afternoon when the Caravan of Wonders halted, for the exhibition of its marvellous appurtenances. The facetious lessee of the concern for the time being had selected the centre of a rural village—a quiet, secluded, sleepy-looking place, with fine old trees rising up among the houses here and there, in their leafy mantles of waving foliage, and usually overtopping the humble cottages they sheltered; except in front of the alehouse, where the huge lime that stood at the door looked as if it had grown against the imaginary ceiling, and, not being able to shoot upwards, had spread out in proportion, for the express purpose of forming a summer lounging-place for thirsty travellers.

It was also very hot. The most argumentative individual would not have contradicted the fact. So thought the waggoner, who was asleep beneath the tilt of his waggon, whilst his horses dreamily mumbled some warm hay from a rack, or coquetted with the tepid water in the trough; so thought the host, who was smoking a pipe in his shirt-sleeves, exactly in the centre of the entrance to his inn, as much

as to say it was of no use disturbing him by going in, for he was too hot to attend to anybody; so thought the cows, as they stood knee-deep in water, vainly endeavouring to chastise impertinent flies with their tails. And so, doubtless, thought Mr. Prodgers and his fellow-student, who were sitting on the shelving turf at the side of the river, pelting small pebbles at a water-lily that trembled in the sunlight on the surface of the stream, whose rippling harmonised well with the crackling of the seed-pods of the wild plants upon the bank, and produced the only sounds that broke the afternoon stillness; except the occasional wincing of the two horses besieged by insects who were cropping the grass at the side of the show, and now and then rattled their patchwork harness in so restless a manner as to call forth a passing reproof from their owner.

The mystic Crindle was still overlooking his apparatus, whilst the talented siffleur had lighted an ancient pipe, and now reposed at full length beneath some trees, apparently taking a few gratuitous lessons in his art from the birds overhead. The Children of Caucasus, together with the Punch and fantoccini, were ensconced in the tap-room of the inn; and Mr. Prodgers, having come to the termination of a tankard of home-brewed ale, in the discussion of which Mr. Tweak had ably assisted, now turned towards the house, and shouted for the attendant. The host, nothing disturbed, quietly telegraphed the boy from within, and he leisurely approached the customers.

"Now, young pot-hook," said Mr. Prodgers, "stir yourself a little, and bring me a goblet of cool half-and-half."

The boy, as soon as he clearly understood what a goblet meant, took the empty measure, and in a few instants returned with it; carrying it, however, very leisurely over the small patch of grass between the inn and the river.

"I hope this is good," observed Mr. Tweak. "You ought always to put the ale in first for fear the porter shouldn't leave room for it—it's very apt to behave so."

As the boy retired he was hailed by the driver of the caravan for some additional refection.

"Now, look sharp, you small go of humanity," said that individual, who was known to his very particular acquaintances as Joe Bantam. "You seems too tender to move."

"It's so precious hot!" said the boy, with a sigh, indulging in a performance with his mouth, analogous to blowing off nothing from the tip of his nose. "Suppose you had to be druv about such weather as this, how would you feel?"

"Well, I likes that, anyhow, my half-pint," returned the other. "What have my pardners got to do to-night, I should like to know?"

The boy expressed his inability to comply with Mr. Bantam's desire for information.

"Well, wait, and you'll find out; but don't complain of work. I comes from Sheffield; look at the boys there. They works, they does. Look at that teaboard you are carrying. Do you see it?"

As the article in question was about two feet square, it could not very well escape the boy's observation.

"Now, all them flying heffuts was painted by babbies in cradles: the hinfant school does it. Was you ever in a hinfant school?"

"Nobody ever taught me nothink," answered the boy.

"I should think so," rejoined Mr. Bantam; "you looks like it. Now, the Sheffield children knows everything. Their very playthings is screw-taps and hand-vices; and they gives 'em riveting-hammers, to keep 'em quiet, instead of lollipops. There—be off, and look after your customers, for our gentlemen is coming up."

And indeed, as the afternoon was advancing, Mr. Prodgers contemplated commencing their performance; and now left the river side for the purpose of collecting his troupe. The Circassians were summoned from the tap-room, wherein they had been completing their toilets, and obeyed his orders. The leader of the party, and strongest man, who rejoiced in the Caspian name of Bill, was a fine study for a sample of his class. He was attired in an old great-coat, in which string, pins, and buttons struggled to possess the greatest power of attachment; whilst below the skirts, which long wear had vandyked and scalloped in its own peculiar fashion, there appeared a pair of legs, evidently destitute of trousers, but encased in cotton tights coarsely pinked. But these legs were not like human legs in ordinary, which are usually endowed with one fixed method of action: on the contrary, all the joints appeared to be formed upon the principle of the ball and socket rather than the hinge; and nobody would have been in the least degree astonished to have seen the feet turn round upon their axes, and go heels forward; or the whole limbs assume that position of indefinite action which a limp sawdust doll exhibits when made to stand upon its legs. One of his companions was similarly attired, although younger, and of slighter build: his head being covered with an old seal-skin cap, whilst a considerable aperture in the shoulder of his upper garment betrayed a pair of red braces, covered with large tarnished spangles, to the eyes of curious beholders. The other was evidently the senior of the three, and of that pinched up and spare appearance which almost tempted one to believe that he had been compelled by intense poverty to dispose of his inside at a great sacrifice, without the power of ever redeeming it. Notwithstanding the heat of the day, he was enveloped in a dingy cloak, which he termed his "rockelo," of a faded puce colour, shot with dust; and this he kept wrapped around him, although his painted face bore evidence that he was considered to be the grotesque, or clown, of the party.

"Well, my man," asked Mr. Prodgers, as he advanced, "how are things looking?"

"Up-ish," was the reply: "they are talking about us in the inn, and I think we shall do. It's a pity that old grey mare isn't safe to ride in a ring."

"Why so?"

"Because Tom could get up an act of horsemanship," replied the Caucasian, pointing to their youngest companion. "He has done the Courier of Petersburg and the Druken Hussar often, when he was with Samwell's lot."

"You'd do something a good deal more curious than them, if you was to get on that old mare, I reckon," observed Mr. Bantam.

And this indirect aspersion upon the trustworthy character of one of his stud immediately settled the question.

At last the hour arrived when Mr. Prodgers thought it time to open his caravan to the public; and having directed the younger of the Caucasian children to hoist up the pictures, he set the directors of the fantoccini outside, to attract the audience by a gratuitous exhibition; and one of them also formed the orchestra. It is true the band was not extensive, being composed of a drum and pandean pipes alone; but much effect was produced by the ingenuity of the performer, who played first one and then the other, and then both together, beating the drum very hard when his breath failed him for the pipes. So that altogether it might be considered rather effective than otherwise, and perfectly answered the object of drawing a large assemblage of the villagers together.

The speech which Mr. Prodgers addressed to the spectators was modelled after the most celebrated specimens of travelling-show declamation—a school of oratory to which he had paid great attention; and he was ably assisted by the grotesque, who drew down shouts of laughter by his interpolations, in which Mr. Tweak heartily joined; albeit he felt somewhat nervous, and not altogether without apprehension lest any of the Board of Examiners at the College of Surgeons should pass that way by chance, and see how they were engaged.

"We shall commence ladies and gentlemen," said Mr. Prodgers, "with the wonderful feats of the Children of Caucasus, who will go through a variety of posturing, balancing, and ground and lofty tumbling; as well as trampolines and somersaults."

"As well as trampling on the sunset," observed the merryman.

"And the celebrated dance which was never performed by the great dancers at Her Majesty's Opera in London, on account of its being too difficult."

"That's a lie!" observed the clown of Caucasus, in a confidential manner to the crowd.

"What did you say, sir?" asked Mr. Prodgers, with a stern air of authority.

"I said they didn't like to try," replied the grotesque, with much simplicity.

"Beautiful Prodgers!" exclaimed Mr. Tweak, in a demi-voice from the doorway. "One would think you had taken lessons in circus etiquette, for many years, of Widdecomb."

"After which," continued Mr. Prodgers, kicking back his leg to imply that Mr. Tweak's compliment was appreciated, but that he was not to pay any more, "after which the celebrated silleur, who is on terms of chatting familiarity with every singing-bird in the world, will delight his hearers. The whole to conclude with the mystic delusions of the unapproachable wizard of every point in the compass. Admission, ladies and gentlemen, sixpence each; servants and working people, threepence."

At the conclusion of this address the band struck up a lively air,

and the company began to ascend the steps. Mr. Tweak experienced at times some little difficulty in drawing the line between the sixpenny classes and their inferiors, but at last this was happily arranged; and then the entertainments commenced to an audience of nine-and-sixpence, who were highly delighted, although the height of the caravan did not admit of the lofty tumbling advertised, for which an apology was made by the manager. When the performance was over, a fresh batch came forward, and then another, and another, until the final close. Mr. Tweak announced to his friend the gratifying intelligence that there was upwards of five pounds in the treasury: a sum which exceeded their most sanguine expectations.

As Mr. Prodgers was requested by the members of his troupe to allow them to turn the interior of the caravan into a many-bedded room without beds, for that night only, he bespoke the best chamber the inn afforded for himself and Mr. Tweak; as well as an excellent supper of new-laid eggs and home-cured bacon, in which dish ended the host's assurance that they could have anything they pleased to order. They were received at the inn with the most marked deference, being regarded as persons of almost supernatural qualities; and attended to with the greatest alacrity by the boy, whose activity increased as the temperature of the day diminished. And when they finally retired for the night, somewhat fatigued with their exertions, upon gazing from their bedroom window, which overlooked the green, a light was still burning in the interior of the caravan; and occasionally sounds of merriment burst from the interior, through the stillness of the country evening, which proved that their talented company, in the absence of anything to lie down upon, had determined upon making a night of it.

"Well, Tweaky," exclaimed Mr. Prodgers to his companion, as he unpacked his toilet appointments from his nightcap, which he generally used as a carpet-bag on his excursions, "I think we have done pretty well to day. It almost tempts me to give up the study of medicine and take to conjuring. I don't see much difference between the two."

"Not much," said Mr. Tweak sleepily. "Good-night."

"Good-night," replied Mr. Prodgers, yawning. "I am very tired, and shall have no great wish to unbutton my eyelids and get up to-morrow morning."

And then all was still: whilst Nature unfolded her own mystic wonders to the quiet night, with no witnesses except the stars, who were winking at the silent workings of her laboratory, like the eyes of an old gentleman on the bottom row of the Royal Institution, when an experiment of unusual interest defies his conjectures.

CHAPTER LII.

MRS DE ROBINSON'S FETE CHAMPETRE

BUT if all was thus tranquil at the village, the scene was very different at Mrs. De Robinson's villa residence on the Thames. For there the preparations for the gaiety of the morrow kept everybody wide awake until an advanced hour; and whilst the servants were occupied in their respective departments, Miss De Robinson was cutting out water-lilies in silver paper, under the direction of Mrs. Waddleston, which were to be pinned upon bungs and set floating upon the river, restrained from going down the stream to the next lock by small plummets of curled lead. Mr. De Robinson junior had cleared out the summer-house; and having manufactured a hermit, had seated him therein, deeply engaged in studying the daybook of an insolvent grocer, which he procured from his father's office; and, this finished, he was arranging small hooks about the trees for the illuminated lamps, and putting the last touches to a grand pictorial representation of Hong Kong, with Mount Vesuvius in the background. This elaborate production had been built up by him, with the assistance of an under scene-painter, brought from town for the purpose, and was to be the *cheval de bataille* of the evening, forming the scene of the pyrotechnic exhibition. It was constructed, in imitation of more extensive views in the metropolis, upon the edge of the pond, in the field adjoining the lawn; and when finished Mr. De Robinson junior, having lighted some bits of wax-candle, sat upon the grass and looked at it, until he had well-nigh fallen asleep, in a mingled state of fatigue and admiration.

As Mr. De Robinson's barometer, upon which he set great value, usually prognosticated the weather inversely, everybody retired to bed very joyously upon hearing that the glass was very low, feeling assured that such a condition foretold a lovely day on the morrow; and when the morrow arrived, the bright sun confirmed their expectations; nor was there a cloud in the sky that looked at all as if it meant mischief, to induce that unpleasant suspense which usually attends all out-of-door entertainments in England.

The guests had not been asked to assemble before three o'clock; but shortly after noon Mr. Prodgers made his appearance with his talented company; and, having been introduced to the ladies of the house, proceeded, with young De Robinson, to assign each to his station, and tell them what they were to do. To the wizard was appropriated a small marquee upon the lawn, where he was to conjure perpetually; the Punch and fantoccini were placed at the end of an avenue; the sifleur, who had arrayed himself in an elegant national costume of green baize trimmed with shoe strings, was to walk about amongst the guests; and the Children of Caucasus, when called upon, were to exhibit on a small plot of grass in front of a light waggon, which, decorated with boughs, formed the orchestra. And, lastly, Mr.

De Robinson led Messrs. Prodgers and Tweak towards his view of Hong Kong, and explained its mechanism, in which he should take the liberty of requesting them to assist him at night.

All these preliminaries were scarcely settled when the visitors began to arrive. Many of them came down by water, and were received with salutes from a small battery of brass cannon placed upon the lawn, which one of the Leanders of Mr. De Robinson's acquaintance had borrowed from a fast man who kept a yacht; and these were responded to with cheers from the little boys in the road, who clung to the palings like bees, peeping over into the garden, and lost in admiration at the, to them, mystic preparations. The company was received by Mrs. De Robinson and her daughter in an arbour of the choicest exotics, hired from the adjacent nursery; and then the old ladies were handed over to the care of Mrs. Waddleston, who entertained them with anecdotes of great people, whilst the young ones promenaded about the grounds, and exclaimed, "Oh, how exceedingly pretty!" to everything they saw. The refreshments were supplied from the window of the dining-room, which made a species of bar on a genteel scale; and after a little time the visitors dispersed about, in groups of six or seven, beneath the trees, looking like the garden of Boccaccio seen through a multiplying glass, and forming such *tableaux* as Watteau would most probably have painted, had he lived now instead of when he did.

Amongst these latter was Emma Ledbury, looking so radiant and pretty that there was only one opinion as to her being the belle of the assemblage. Indeed, a very elegant gentleman, who had driven down from town in his cab, and took care to let everybody know it, was so struck with her that he scarcely knew where to find compliments enough to express his admiration; until a few of Emma's sensible replies, purposely given in a very matter-of-fact and natural manner, disconcerted him to that degree that he quietly lounged away, and endeavoured to create a greater sensation in other quarters. And when he was gone, a great many young men requested an introduction to her, in the hope of establishing themselves in her favour. But Emma saw nobody amongst them who, in her opinion, at all came up to Jack; and so she cut all their fine speeches so very short that one by one they fell off from her train, putting her down as a very strange girl, and being perfectly unable to make out how Mr. Prodgers finally engrossed her conversation. For Mr. Prodgers was not a cavalier of the first water in the eyes of the elegant gentlemen, who wondered at the patronage he received; but Emma knew that he had been Jack's friend during his abode with Mr. Rawkins, and this was quite enough to make her think more of him than anybody else there. And, in turn, he was so delighted at being thus noticed, that all the wonderful people under his care were quite forgotten, and allowed to get through their performances as well as they could.

The professionals, however, acquitted themselves very creditably, and some of the guests even contributed to the festivities of the day, especially Master Cripps and his sisters, who performed a scene descriptive of Swiss life on the mountains, and were loudly applauded.

by the large circle of surrounding spectators. The Misses Cripps were seated at a grand piano (which was wheeled out into the garden for the purpose), in very large straw hats, and first performed a duet expressive of a snow-storm, the idea being conveyed by keeping the low notes in a state of unceasing rumble; after which, in the characters of mother and daughter, they expressed their fears that some merry Swiss boy, named Edwin, in whose welfare they felt an interest, would get snowed up on the mountains; the anxiety of the mother being much increased by her consciousness that he was from home, and her ignorance of where he lingered. But presently, to their surprise and gratification, the notes of a flageolet were heard from behind the contiguous arbour, and the young ladies both exclaimed, "Hark! hark! what sounds are those I hear?" as if the flageolet had been an unknown instrument, and perfectly beyond their most acute conjectures as to its acoustic organisation.

But the mystery was soon solved by the appearance of Master Cripps, who danced a lively measure to the symphony of the piano, and shot out from behind the arbour, amidst the "Bravoes!" of the bystanders. Master Cripps was attired in a pair of cotton drawers, tied with blue ribands at the knees, as also were his shirt-sleeves above and below the elbows, after the most approved style of peasants dwelling in Helvetia's mountain-bowers, and young rustics in tolerably comfortable circumstances, like Lothair and Elvino. Besides this, Master Cripps had on glazed pumps, and had also put his feet through a pair of mittens, which he had pulled round the calves of his legs, the whole costume being strikingly characteristic of humble Swiss life, and peculiarly adapted for leaving the wearer perfectly at his ease in the midst of glaciers and snow-drifts, and allowing that free play of the limbs which the chase of the chamois calls forth. Mrs. Waddleston was delighted, and took occasion to inform those within hearing that she had accompanied the Marquis of Heydown through Switzerland, and a great way beyond it, during his late tour (which had created so great a sensation in the upper circles that now no traveller's trunk was without it, firmly pasted to the interior), and consequently could bear witness to the vividness of the personation. And she also regretted that the marquis was not present: for, the De Robinson villa being on the water-side, he would possibly have condescended to have shown the company how to set the Thames on fire, which he had more than once hinted at his power of being able to accomplish in that great work. Emma Ledbury, who was standing very near to her, leaning on the arm of Mr. Prodggers, heard this; but little knew that Jack and Titus were in his lordship's company at that very time, many hundred miles away.

Master Cripps soon relieved the anxiety of his fond relatives by telling them that he had merely been detained by some indefinite fair—a merry-making, not a female—and had brought them home a present therefrom. This was very elegant, being a rosette with streamers, formed by tricolour ribands of that breadth known in commerce as "fourpenny"; and, if his relatives kept a carriage, very serviceable to put on the left ear of the near horse, and produce the

one-sided deception practised in a similar manner with respect to the black velvet trappings of funerals. The joy of the two ladies was very great to see Master Cripps return; and then they all three joined in a glee, expressive of love, affection, and contentment, which concluded with great effect, amidst the thanks of the audience generally.

And so things went on, everybody imagining that they were enjoying themselves, as is common upon such occasions. The conjurer performed *à merveille*; the Causicans threw their legs over their shoulders, hopped like frogs, and stood upon one another's heads; and the other wonders exerted themselves with the same success, under the superintendence of Mr. Tweak, who, having passed his apprenticeship in a remote county union, felt more at his ease amongst the *saltimbanques* than in the fashionable world. Some of the company looked on, others flirted, more went on the water, and the rest danced until evening arrived, and Mr. De Robinson prepared for his pyrotechnic exhibition of Hong Kong, and the ascent of a fire-balloon. And whilst the company partook of tea and syllabub, he proceeded with Mr. Prodgers and his companion to make the necessary arrangements for the display.

The scene was arranged, as we have described, upon the edge of a pond, in a paddock adjoining the lawn, and separated therefrom by an invisible fence. An additional effect was produced by the model of a junk, borrowed from the museum of the Clumpley Literary Institution, which floated in front: and there was also a whale, that was to spout real water from his blowholes by means of a mystic arrangement of sub-aqueous india-rubber tubes, in which the garden-engine was to be principally concerned. At the edge of the pond was a shed filled with straw, not very Chinese or picturesque in its appearance; but as it could not be moved, Mr. De Robinson had painted it with gay colours, and stuck a transparent lantern on the roof, politely furnished from the windows of the waggish tradesman who had christened his establishment "The Clumpley T Mart." When all was ready, and it was sufficiently dark, Mr. De Robinson rang the dinner-bell to summon the company; and, after a little delay, caused by moving the rout-seats from the house to the lawn, they were all arranged in order. Mrs. Waddleston took the centre place in the front row, that she might say out loud whether or not it was a resemblance of Vesuvius, and discover if Hong Kong appeared a pleasant place, as she had some thoughts of going there by herself next autumn.

As soon as the guests had admired the effect of the illumination-lamps, which had been lighted up in their absence, and now sparkled amongst the trees like the jewelled fruit in the fairy gardens of Aladdin, the exhibition commenced by the band playing the overture to "The Bronze Horse." Then artfully constructed fireworks and coloured lights went off in all directions, revealing all the pretty faces of the young ladies, rendered doubly attractive and coquettish by the lace-bordered handkerchiefs they had tied, gipsy-fashion, over their heads. Mr. Prodgers, in his anxiety to light the fireworks, sometimes

appeared high above the mountains of the background, like another Polyphemus, or spectre of the Brocken, until he died away in the darkness consequent upon the final bangs of the cases; after which the fall of the rocket-sticks upon the heads of the company diverted their attention. The whale was a great "hit," as well as the outburst of Vesuvius, which Mr. Tweak medically defined as an eruption, preceded by great sub-cutaneous inflammation of maroons and crackers. Then small cannon were discharged from the junk, and answered from the batteries; and finally a fire-balloon was announced as about to ascend.

After the time necessary for its inflation with rarified air, the Montgolfier slowly rose. But, as chance would have it, at this precise moment a breeze sprang up from the river, and, slightly tipping the balloon on one side, caused it to catch fire. The flame spread rapidly, and it fell blazing almost immediately upon the thatched top of the straw shed, which, perfectly dry from the heat of the weather, instantly ignited. The audience, who imagined the taking of Hong Kong was to be the *chef-d'œuvre* of the spectacle, and conceived this a portion of it, applauded most vigorously, and cries of "Capital!" "Excellently managed!" "Bravo!" burst from all quarters.

They were soon undeceived. In a terrible alarm at the unrehearsed effect of his aeronautical undertaking, Mr. De Robinson junior tore the garden-engine away from its communication with the whale, and hurriedly giving the hose to Mr. Prodgers, told him to direct it at the flames, whilst he pumped with all his might, in an agony lest the fire should communicate with the rest of the building. But Mr. Prodgers, a little bewildered at the instant, was somewhat uncertain in his aim; and the consequence was that the next moment a deluge of water flew wildly in the faces of the audience, the smoke completely obscuring their position, drenching them to the skin, and paralysing the greater part of them with terror. Mr. De Robinson, who conceived their cries of alarm to arise from the fall of the burning embers amongst them, worked the engine harder than ever, until Mrs. Waddleston, who was exposed to all its force, was as completely soaked as if she had tumbled into the river itself; whilst the whole company made a mad retreat, tumbling over the seats, shrieking and fainting in every direction.

As might be conceived, this untimely *contretemps* very soon brought the festivities to a close. In vain did Mrs. De Robinson, as soon as she regained her reason, offer shawls and cloaks—the ladies were all anxious to get home as soon as they could; in vain did Mr. De Robinson junior pump, and Mr. Prodgers guide the engine in all directions—the entire shed was burnt down, in spite of all their exertions. And, to complete the panic, the parish engine, which had been undisturbed for years, came rattling up within five minutes, surrounded by a hundred boys from the village, and forcibly took possession of the grounds, with all its attendants, amidst the confusion of the different carriages, whipping, jamming, and driving in for their occupiers.

This was too much. The guests hurried off in the greatest dismay,

seizing upon strange flies, and forcibly appropriating other people's vehicles to themselves, in their excitement. And, when all had departed, the Lady De Robinson went into hysterics; Mrs. Waddleston declared her intention of leaving the next morning, never to return, feeling assured that the insult was intended by her nephew, because she had set her face against the engagement of ballet-girls; and Mr. De Robinson junior got rid of Mr. Prodgers and his company as soon as he could, and in the politest possible manner, promising to call upon him in town and settle everything connected with the festival which had terminated so inauspiciously.

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CHAPTER LIII.

LEDBURY AND JACK CONTINUE THEIR JOURNEY UP THE RHINE—THE
LEGEND OF LURLEY.

ACCORDING to the determination of the previous evening, when Mr. Ledbury had so suddenly raised the siege of Ehrenbreitstein, at half-past six the next morning he was once more on board the steamboat, and, with his friend, again pursuing their course along the turbid waters of the Rhine. Titus felt rather nervous as he reflected on his precipitate retreat from the fortress; and it was not until a turn in the river shut out the "broad stone of honour" from his view that he entirely recovered his self-possession.

Several of their companions in the journey of the preceding day were on board, including the pensive gentleman, and the majority of the English tourists, who had stopped one night at Coblenz, first, to say they had been there; and secondly, to give an account of its principal curiosities, its manners, customs, and institutions, when they wrote a book on their return home, for which purpose they were all engaged in taking notes. Jack and Ledbury occupied their old positions on the tubs at the head of the boat, and were soon engaged in chat with those around them concerning the different localities upon the banks. As they arrived off Boppard, and the vessel stopped for a few minutes to take in passengers, a gentleman of high bearing and imposing *tournure* came marching down the platform with his laly, who was in an elegant costume of feathers and satin, adapted for the middle horticultural *fête* at Chiswick, and therefore perfectly in keeping with the scenery of the Rhine. He was followed by the attendant from one of the hotels with whom he seemed to be engaged in high argument respecting a question of remuneration.

"Nein, nein Kellner," exclaimed the gentleman; "nothing—I have nothing for you. Want of attention, high charges, and plebeian accommodation."

As the speaker stood on the deck of the boat, the waiter let fall a few words of masked impertinence, and turned upon his heel.

"Ah, ah!" continued the gentleman, apparently addressing himself to everybody, "you may reply, waiter; but look at the *Livre des Voyageurs*. One of my party has recorded the entertainment as detestable, and our names are affixed thereto."

"How lucky we are," said Jack to Ledbury, "to see Boppart to-day!"

"Why so, Jack?"

"Why, of course the hotel will shut up after that terrible blow, and that will ruin the town. Boppart is doomed."

And so evidently thought the gentleman, from the look of vengeance that he threw towards it. As his carriage was on board, he hastily assisted the lady into it, as if it had been a camphorated asylum from the contagion of the vulgar; and then, apparently satisfied that there were no very disreputable people within some distance, he strode to the forepart of the boat, and took his place close to our tourists. But as his arrival did not appear to create any great sensation amongst the party, he drew a gilt-edged morocco note-book from his pocket, and, under pretence of inserting a memorandum therein, held it in such a direction that the others could read the name embossed upon the cover, and be perfectly aware that it was no other than the Marquis of Heydown who now honoured them by joining their circle.

"I say, Jack," whispered Ledbury, "do you see that? He's a marquis!"

"Very well," replied Johnson, "I know it. Let's ask him how he feels on the whole this morning."

"Hush!—don't be silly," said Titus. "Perhaps he will not like it."

"Pray, sir," interposed the pensive gentleman, speaking to Johnson, and coming to the relief of Titus, whose ideas of addressing a marquis were somewhat vague, "pray, sir, what are those ruins high up on our left?"

"Liebenstein and Sternfels," answered Jack "They are called The Brothers."

"Beautiful relics of an age gone by!" ejaculated the pensive gentleman, apostrophising the ruins. "Were ye endowed with tongues, what a number of thrilling stories could you relate!"

"Except it were a one-storeyed building," said Jack.

But the pensive gentleman, apparently not comprehending him kept gazing with rapt admiration at the ruins as he murmured—

"The tenants of those bleak battlements have passed away, and an unhonoured grave is all their former lords have gained."

"I think he has drunk a little too much moselle at breakfast," whispered Ledbury.

"Not at all," said Jack; "he has been taken poorly in the same way two or three times since we have travelled with him."

"Then he must be slightly mad," continued Titus.

“Not exactly mad,” returned Johnson; “but I think he’s a poet. I’ll draw him out, and then drop him.” And with this resolve Jack spouted forth, as he looked towards The Brothers—

“And there they stand, as stands a lofty mind,
Worn, but unstooping to the baser crowd.”

The pensive gentleman turned round, and looked at Jack as if he could not believe such feeling existed in the mind of one whose story of the Drachenfels had so rudely disturbed his romance. But Jack was gazing so earnestly at the ruins, with such an expression of enthusiasm in his features, that the pensive gentleman felt assured, after all, he was a kindred spirit, and replied—

“You are right, sir. How has the present degenerated from the emblazoned glories of the past!”

“It has indeed!” exclaimed Johnson. “Think of the golden epochs of the Rhine, when no base spirit could call his life or goods his own; but those great minds, who ruled these castle keeps, rushed like a torrent down upon the vale, sweeping the flocks and herds!”

“Ah! those were thrilling times!” said the pensive gentleman, “days of giant enterprise. The prowess of those mighty spirits swept away not only the cattle, as you have so well observed, but even the dwellings of their opponents.”

“Dwellings, sir!” continued Jack, with dramatic energy. “They even swept the chimneys. The whole race for power was one great sweep, where either party tried to save the stake that awaited him if he lost.”

“They were perpetually fighting with each other,” observed the pensive gentleman. “They led a life of unceasing skirmish.”

“It was through these constant brushes that so many things were swept away,” replied Jack, no longer able to command his features, but laughing in the middle of his sentence.

“I was not in a humour for absurd ridicule, sir,” said the pensive gentleman, with some warmth, as he perceived Jack’s ill-suppressed merriment; and darting daggers at Johnson, he started up from his seat and sought the other end of the boat.

The marquis, who had been all this time looking very exclusive now appeared to unbend a little, and, of his own accord, observed to Johnson—

“I am considerably disappointed in the Rhine.”

“Everybody is, sir,” returned Johnson, “that ever I met with; only they do not like to say so, for fear of being shouted at. It’s a mere popular delusion, which the guide-books, hotels, and steamers have an interest in keeping up.”

“They will not do so long,” replied the marquis. “I have a book coming out which will set everything to rights. Perhaps you do not know with whom you are conversing.”

“I have not that pleasure,” answered Jack, purposely concealing his knowledge of the other’s rank.

"I am the Marquis of Heydown," said the nobleman.

Upon which Jack made a polite bow, and Ledbury tried to do the same; but he had tied his cap under his chin with a piece of string, to keep it from being blown away, and could not get it off his head.

"I am writing a book," continued the marquis, most patronisingly communicative—"a book which I think has long been wanted. Not a common itinerary, but a view of that exclusive society which travellers of my rank can alone obtain."

"I think such a work would attract notice, my lord," returned Jack, "and be very diverting to persons like ourselves."

"Unquestionably," replied the noble author. "My position and influence with our embassies will procure me admission everywhere."

"Wherever it was practicable, of course, my lord," said Jack.

"Of course," echoed the marquis, somewhat indignantly; "and where it was not, if I were refused, I would publish my correspondence with them on the subject. A proper exposure would then make it a matter of government, and call down popular indignation. Poof! what insufferable smells pollute these steamboats!"

And, disgusted at a slight odour of hot oil which came up for a moment from the engine-room, the noble tourist sought refuge in his carriage, and appeared no more.

The steamer vibrated onwards, but now made slower way; for they were approaching the most romantic portion of the river, where the stream flows with increased force and rapidity between the almost perpendicular boundaries of rugged black granite, which are crowned by the ruins of Rheinfels and Katz. The mind of the pensive gentleman was evidently bursting with emotion; but, as he could not very well make out the localities, and knew nothing of the traditions, he found it best, for his own convenience, to keep close to Johnson after all. And so he once more sidled up to the end of the boat, and gradually entered into conversation again.

"And what are those ruined keeps, sir?" he asked, pointing to a dilapidated tower.

"They are the ruins of the Katz," replied Jack. "You know the story connected with them?"

The pensive gentleman had never heard it.

"Well, then," continued the irreclaimable Jack, "after Bishop Hatton had baited his own trap with himself, and been eaten up by the rats in the *Maus-thurm*, which we shall see by-and-by, the Burgraves built this castle to guard against such another shocking instance of shocking voracity."

"In what manner, sir?" asked the traveller.

"By storing it with hundreds of cats," replied Jack, "from which it derived its name. But in a time of famine, when provisions ran short, they devoured their keepers; and then the place went to decay, as you see."

Mr. Ledbury here attempted a tepid joke, something about "catastrophe"; but, upon a look from Jack of wild astonishment, he felt that the age of the jest was no protection against its enormity,

and shrank back in great confusion as the word died away from his lips.

"I did not expect this from you, Leddy," said Jack, more in sorrow than in censure, "or that you were in such an abject state of jocular destitution. You have only now to call snuffing a candle 'throwing a little light upon the subject,' and then you will have arrived at the last pitch of facetious degradation."

Titus made no reply; but his lip quivered as he acknowledged the justness of his friend's reproaches.

A sharp turn of the Rhine, which now swept rapidly round the base of an enormous rock, brought our travellers to the celebrated Lurleyberg. A gun was here fired to call out the echoes from their rocky homes, and the report, having reverberated four or five times, gradually diminishing, until it sounded like distant thunder.

"What a beautiful echo!" exclaimed Ledbury, glad of diversion. "How is it produced, Jack?"

"Why, here you have it," replied Johnson, drawing a rough sketch upon the top of the tub with a piece of chalk, as well as several lines running from 1 to 2, and from A to B. "There—that's the whirlpool, and those are the photographic—no—philanthropic—phonocamptic—that's it—phonocamptic centres. Don't you understand?"

"Oh, yes—perfectly," said the pensive gentleman.

"I'm glad of it," replied Jack, "because it's more than I do; but I dare say it's all right. The guide-books have it, so it must be."

"What is the tradition of the Lurleyberg?" asked Ledbury.

"I'll tell you," replied Jack.

And taking his old MS. note-book from his pocket, he commenced.

THE LEGEND OF LURLEY.

"Every traveller hashes up the tradition of the Lurleyberg in a way that he supposes will be most palatable to his readers."—*A Family Tour, &c.*

The bell for the compline, with echoing roar,
 Had call'd to their mass the young monks of St. Goar,
 And their banquet they left, and its bacchanal strains,
 With a little too much Rhenish wine in their brains;
 For in ages of yore,
 The young monks of St. Goar,
 Were wilder than other monks since or before;
 You'd have thought that each merry-eyed shaven young spark
 Had come up the Rhine from the Convent of Lark.
 At last it was over, the prayers were said,
 And the monks swarm'd giddily off to bed,
 Like a cluster of tipsy bees.
 Within 'twas all snug; but the north wind without
 Was indulging itself in a terrible rout,
 As chimneys and gables it blew in and out
 And rattled the vanes and the casements about;
 Now mimicking laughter, shriek, whistle, and shout;
 Sometimes whirling off a loose pantile or spout
 To the cloisters below, with a deuce of a clout.
 Or stripping a branch from the trees.

At length in the corridors old was no step heard,
 But all was as still as the night when Jack Sheppard
 With footstep as stealthy as panther or leopard,
 Escaped from his dread doom
 By leaving the "red room,"
 Exclaiming, as if all upbraiding to smother,
 "Each brick I take out brings me nearer my mother!"
 (If you ask for the last rhyme to whom I'm in debt,
 I confess that it comes from the song of "We met,"
 In which some young lady, much given to languish,
 Abuses her mother for causing her anguish).

But young Father Winkle *he* went not to sleep,
 For he had that night an appointment to keep,
 So stealthily down the back stairs he did creep,
 And crossing the cloister, whilst sounded the hour,
 He reached the old gate of the almoner's tower,
 Where, coaxing the lock with a huge gothic key,
 He let in the guest he expected to see.
 It was not a penitent come to confess,
 Nor a foot-weary pilgrim in want of distress,
 But—*O pudor! O mores!*—a beautiful girl!
 Who enter'd the room with a bound and a twirl,
 Which the "omnibus" heads would have set in a whirl,
 Though pretty Cerito most jealous might feel,
 With Planquet, and Sheffer, and little Camille,
 In a very short dress of the loveliest green,
 More fine and transparent than ever was seen
Bouffée'd by a jupe of the best crinoline.
 By what chance *she*
 First came to be
 Within St. Goar's proud monast'ry,
 We know not well;
 But the chronicles tell
Qu'elle avoit une gorge extrêmement belle.

Young Father Winkle fondly gazed upon this lovely form,
 Through whose fair skin the vivid blood was blushing young and warm,
 And felt how beauty's presence proved a "comfort in a storm."
 He look'd upon her flowing hair, so glossy, dark, and long,
 Her eyes so bright, whose magic might cannot be told in song,
 And then his conscience whisper'd he was doing very wrong.
 Although he thought in such a case the fault might be excused;
 For when, by some fair creatures guiles, poor mortals are amused,
 Their just ideas of right and wrong are terribly confused:
 However firm our self-command, all resolution trips
 Beneath the mesmerising thrill of woman's ruby lips.
 But 'tis an adage known full well,
 That folks should never kiss and tell,
 Or else we might have shown
 That the first meeting of the two,
 And greeting eke which did ensue,
 Was not of words alone.

"Now come with me," the fair one cried
 "In these dull cells no longer bide;
 I will become thy river bride,
 And o'er my realms thou shalt preside.
 Away—the dawn is near;
 The wind is hush'd—the storm has pass'd—
 The sky no longer is o'ercast;

And see, the moon begins to shine
 Upon the mountains of the Rhine
 In radiance bright and clear.
 Then come with me, and we will go
 Where the rocks of coral grow,"—
 (I've heard those lines before, I know)

Father Winkle cried "Stay,
 I've a trifle to say
 Ere thus from my duties you draw me astray.
 My beautiful Lurley, one instant delay—
 Each wish that you utter I burn to obey ;
 But, in truth, love, I don't very well see my way ;
 For though many people I've met heretofore
 Find keeping their heads above water a bore,
 Yet keeping mine under would puzzle me more,
 With your own pretty self, as my sentiments prove,
 I'm over my head and my ears now in love,
 And I cannot well see what we gain by the move."
 Replied Lurline. "My dear,
 You have nothing to fear :
 You would sleep just as well in the Rhine's bed as here."
 Said Winkle, said he,
 "That bed won't do for me,
 For its bedding would nothing but winding sheets be,
 And I can't bear wet blankets in any degree.
 In accepting your offer, to me it seems clear,
 That I only should get in so novel a sphere,
 Not my bed and my board, but my bed and my bier."
 "My Winkle," said Lurline, repressing a frown,
 "The bed of the Rhine is of costliest down."
 "Yes, down at the bottom, my own one, I know
 But I'm downy, too : no—I don't think I'll go."
 Then Lurline looked mournfully up in his eye,
 With a face at once impudent, tearful and sly,
 And a sweet *pelite mine*, as if going to cry,
 As she said, "Can it be? would you leave me to die?
 Farewell, cruel Winkle; from hence I shall fly.
 Think of Lurline—sometimes—I am going—good-bye!"
 Thus speaking, the nymph waved her hand in adieu,
 And ere he could answer, dissolved like a view.
 But fair Lurline knew
 What was sure to accrue,
 When from Winkle's fond eyes she so quickly withdrew.
 And she said to herself, as she shipp'd through the wall,
 "I was never yet foil'd—you'll be mine after all."

There's a boat
 That's afloat
 On the edge of the Rhine :
 With a sail
 When a gale
 Should blow on the right line ;
 And Winkle had heard of a jolly young waterman,
 Who at St. Goarshausen used to ply,
 So he stay'd not a second ; you would not have thought a **man**
 Not over lean could so rapidly fly.
 And down to the river he ran like a shot ;
 But when he arrived there the boatman was not :
 For, during the night-time all traffic was dull,
 And the waterman, taking his rest in the lull,
 With an elder-down pillow had feather'd his skull.
 But, there lay the barky, sail, rudder, and oar,
 All properly stamp'd with the cross of St. Goar.

As order'd to be by the Burgraves of yore ;
 For the Burgraves of yore were a powerful *clique* ;
 If they wish'd a thing done, they had only to speak,
 And none dare to show, at their visits, his pique ;
 Although Victor Hugo, they tell us, was grieved
 To find that *his* Burgraves were coldly received.

But, though there was no waterman the fragile boat to guide,
 The fever'd monk push'd off from shore, and launch'd it in the tide ;
 The wind was right, the bark was light, the father's arm was strong,
 And, darting through the foaming waves, they swiftly flew along.
 High on the right the Rheinfels' keep slept in the moon's cold gleam,
 Whilst opposite the lofty Katz was frowning on the stream ;
 And round the huge basaltic rocks one on the other piled,
 The roaring waters leapt and chafed, in whirlpools swift and wild,
 Until, beneath the Lurleyberg, half-hidden by the foam,
 The monk and boat at last drew near fair Lurline's echoing home,
 Where every grim basaltic cliff sings to the lashing spray,
 The only rock harmonicon that's heard both night and day.

And fast unto a mighty stone
 The monk his vessel made,
 At other time in spot so lone
 He had been sore afraid ;
 But, ere he'd any time to think,
 Or from his venture wild to shrink,
 Uprising from the whirlpool's brink,
 Lurline her form betray'd
 And with a voice of magic tone
 Thus sang she, to an air well known :

"I'm the fairest of Rhine's fairy daughters,
Lurley-ety !

Though I ought not to say so myself ;
 Each peri that dwells 'neath its waters—
Lurley-ety !

I rule ; and my slave is each elf.
 Then come, love : oh, come, love, with me,
 I thy own peri, Winkle, will be
 Haste, haste to my home I implore, *Lurley-ety !*
 And give up the cells of St. Goar.

Lurley-ety ! lurley-ety !—now make up your mind
Lurley-ety ! lurley-ety !—or else stay behind.
 Lurley-ety-y-y-y-y y !

The song had concluded, and hush'd was the strain,
 Except that the echoes sang over again,
 As the notes died away
 In the noise of the spray,
 When Winkle, o'ercome, shouted "Lurline !—oh ! stay,
 Believe me, yours truly—yours only—for aye ?"
 He said, and plunged in
 Midst the clash and the din
 Of the eddies ne'er ceasing to bubble and spin,
 And the rock of the Lurleyberg tried to make fast to,
 Like the mates of *Aneas in gurgite vasto* ;
 But soon through the tide
 Came Lurline to his side,
 And into the vortex her lover did guide.
 One shriek of despair
 From the monk rent the air
 As he whirl'd round and round, like a thing at a fair.

Whilst Lurline, enraptured a priest to ensnare,
Plunged after her victim, to meet him elsewhere.
The waters closed over his head with a roar,
And young Father Winkle was heard of no more—
At least that I know of. My Legend is o'er.

MORAL.

Mistrust all short dresses, and *jupes crinolines*,
Whether sported by Alma, Giselle, or Ondine;
Once caught by some bright-eyed Terpsichore's daughter,
You won't very long *keep your head above water!*

"Well, what will you take after that, Jack, to wash it down?" said Ledbury. "I think you need something—does he not, sir?" he continued, addressing their companion.

"It is a mere imitation," observed the pensive gentleman, with a slight sneer.

"It was meant for nothing else," retorted Jack.

"I have read 'Lalla Rookh,'" said the pensive gentleman. "Fad-ladeen disarms all future criticism by his remarks upon the progress of the poem. I would recommend you to do so too." And he evidently thought he had said something very severe.

"And very proper of him, too," replied Jack. "I have the pleasure of drinking to you, sir."

And in a similar manner did the remainder of the day pass on board the *Königin*, until about four o'clock in the afternoon, when they once more landed upon the packet-quay of Mayence, and crossing the Rhine by the bridge of boats, proceeded on the same evening to Frankfort by the railway, where the *Gasthaus zum Weissen Schwan* received them within its hospitable portals.

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CHAPTER LIV

ZURICH—THE NIGHT ON THE RIGI—THE MISTAKE.

THE progress of our two friends was not particularly interesting or chequered by any adventure beyond the ordinary *désagrémens* of travelling for a few days. They left Frankfort the next evening by the mail, and passing through Darmstadt, Heidelberg, and Stuttgart, arrived very early on the third morning at Schaffhausen. Here they shouldered their knapsacks, and, visiting the falls of the Rhine on their way, made a very creditable day's march of thirty miles to Zurich, where they were not sorry once more to enjoy the comfort of a regular night's rest, before making the ascent of the Rigi, which was to be their next excursion on the ensuing day.

“Now everything will depend to-morrow upon fine weather,” said Jack, as they retired to rest. “It looks tolerably clear at present, but you can never calculate upon the skies in these mountainous districts. Let us hope for the best.”

As they were really very tired with their journey, they were both soon asleep. But in the middle of the night Mr. Ledbury awoke, and, having listened attentively for a minute or two, called out to his friend—

“I say, Jack—here’s a nuisance. It’s pouring with rain as fast as it possibly can.”

There was certainly not much mistake about it ; it was coming down a regular deluge.

“Well, it cannot be helped, Leddy,” replied Jack. “Perhaps it will hold up by the morning. Go to sleep again.”

But the chance of an end being put to their Rigi excursion so vexed Mr. Ledbury that he lay in great distress for half-an-hour, during which time the pouring never ceased or abated its violence. At last he gradually dozed off again, but his annoyance haunted him in his sleep, rendering it broken and unrefreshing ; in fact, whilst dreaming that it was a lovely day, he awoke again, as the bell from the adjacent *wasserkirche* chimed the hour of three. To his great dismay, the rain was coming down as fast as ever ! This time he did not disturb Jack ; but, giving up all thoughts of their journey, he turned moodily round, and was once more lost in his slumbers.

It was a quarter to six when they once more awoke, and traffic appeared to be going on with great activity in the streets below, but still the pouring deluge continued. Jack jumped out of bed, and pushed aside the blind, to see if there was any chance of the sky clearing, when, to their surprise, a bright glorious sunbeam darted into the room, and the blue lake, glittering in the morning rays, was covered with boats and passengers, everything looking as lovely, clear, and summer-like as could well be.

“Why, what a deal of unnecessary torment you have given yourself,” said Johnson to his friend. “Here’s a brilliant morning !”

“How remarkably strange !” observed Titus, sitting up in bed, and rubbing his eyes to assure himself that he was not still dreaming.

“Not at all,” replied Jack ; “get out, and judge for yourself.”

And then the enigma was solved. Immediately below their window, in a kind of square, was a large fountain, the water from which dashed over one or two pieces of stonework before it fell into the basin ; and it was this noise which, in the silence of the night, Mr. Ledbury had, very pardonably, mistaken for rain. However, the agreeable surprise made up for all their anxiety ; and, dressing with alacrity, they were soon down at the edge of the lake, where a small steamer was waiting to take them across to Horgen, with several travellers on board, as usual principally English, and all bound upon the same excursions.

A very light vapour was rising along some portion of the shore ; but as this misty curtain was lifted up, the lake came out in all its loveliness ; and the different *châteaux*, farms, orchards, and mountains

surrounding it, dotted with white towers and villagers, formed a scene of which description will convey no proper idea. For the first quarter of an hour everybody was engaged in looking at the beautiful panorama, and uttering exclamations of pleasure; and after that, they began to shut up their maps and guides, and look at one another.

The transit from Zurich to Horgen does not take up much time, and there was a jolly gentleman on board whom Jack scraped acquaintance with, so lively and good-tempered that he made the journey shorter still. He was dressed in a common blouse, check trousers, and ankle-shoes, with something like a game-bag slung over his shoulders, and one of the Rigi poles tipped by a chamois horn in his hand. He appeared to know everybody on board perfectly well, although he had never seen any of them before, and was equally well acquainted with every object upon the shores of the lake.

"Going up the Rigi, sir, I suppose?" he said to Jack. "Walking, I presume?"

"We think of doing so," replied Johnson.

"The only way, sir," replied Mr. Crinks, for such they ascertained his name to be, from a "hand-book" which he lent them. "Your knapsacks are rather too heavy, though; it's a pull, you know."

"And yet we have as little as may well be."

"Ah—too much, sir, too much. Look here," he continued, slapping the bag at his side, "here's my wardrobe. Two shirts, four socks, and a toothbrush. Find two shirts quite enough, one down and t'other come on."

"But how do you manage about clean linen?" inquired Mr. Ledbury.

"Pooh! nothing—wash them myself. Put them on one flat stone, and knock them with another: pin them on my back to dry, and there you are."

"Have you travelled far, sir?" asked Jack, much taken with the *bonhomie* of their new companion.

"No—not this time. I've only walked from Basle; but I'm going on to Constantinople, to see where Hero and Leander swam across the Bosphorus."

"The Hellespont, I think," observed Titus.

"Ah! yes—so it was—one place will do just as well as another."

"But are you really going to Constantinople?" asked Jack.

"Oh, further than that," replied Mr. Crinks: "I shall get to Jericho, if I can."

"I have heard it is a poor place," said Johnson; "merely the huts of some miserable Arabs."

"Never mind that," said their light-hearted companion. "I want to see what it's like; I have always had an idea that it must be such a comic place. Besides, when I'm told to go there, as people often are, I can say I've been, and that will put the drag on at once—ha! ha! ha! Here we are—all alive. This is Horgen: walk up, ladies and gentlemen."

And as the steamboat had arrived at the modest port of this little village, the passengers disembarked, with the exception of a few who were going on to Rapperschwyl.

A long vehicle, something between a van and an omnibus, was waiting to convey them to Zug and Art; and Mr. Crinks immediately took possession of the outside seats, followed by Jaek and Mr. Ledbury, who placed their knapsacks to keep guard, as they intended to walk by the side of the carriage, when with additional horses it toiled up the precipitous road of the Albis.

"Nun, meine Herren: es ist Zeit um abzureisen langsam," cried the driver, as he climbed on to his perch.

"Yes," replied Mr. Crinks.

"What does he say, sir?" asked Ledbury.

"Goodness knows. I always answer 'Yes.' I dare say it's all right."

The crowd of coeks and hens fluttering and cackling about the road—the characteristics of all minor Swiss villages—afforded great amusement to Mr. Crinks, who poked them about with his staff, cheived them into corners and under the omnibus, and whenever he succeeded in catching one, put its head under its wing, and whirling it round and round, made it what he called tippy, laughing with great glee at its ludicrous attempts to maintain its equilibrium when set down again, in which the driver halted to join, deeming it a performance of excellent humour.

"I say, old fellow, you are loitering in the Poultry," said Mr. Crinks, laughing. "You'd have the Lord Mayor after you in London—eh?"

"Ich hatte nicht verstanden," answered the coachman.

"Oh, very well," continued Mr. Crinks; "just as you please. I'm not proud; I'll stand anything you like at the next ghost-house."

The series of magnificent views which opened through the mist one after another, as they climbed the Albis, now stopped all conversation; but when they had arrived at the top, and began to descend, Johnson, Titus, and their new acquaintance climbed up to the seat, and took their places by the driver. And then they were all very merry, singing, laughing, and telling all sorts of droll stories, whilst the omnibus proceeded along the beautiful roads between Zug and Art, with the clear sparkling lake on the right, and a succession of precipices, vineyards, and cascades on the left, following each other the whole distance; and every now and then a turn of the road disclosed the blue summit of the Rigi, towering far above the mountains by which it was surrounded.

As their carriage stopped to put down its passengers in front of the little inn at Art, they were immediately besieged by a crowd of boys proffering their services as guides to the Rigi, or carriers of their luggage, one of whom seized upon Mr. Ledbury's knapsack, and ran off with it as fast as he could—not with the intention of stealing it, but to ensure a customer for the excursion. But Titus immediately darted off after him, and succeeded in regaining his property, as

valiantly as he had done at Coblenz ; after which he returned to his friends amidst a shower of stones from the disappointed Swiss boy and his fellows.

"I never have a guide anywhere," said Mr. Crinks, "especially in Switzerland: nobody in his senses ever does. I either make friends with those who hire one, or find out the way by myself."

"You are quite right," replied Jack. "On these mountain roads the difficulty is, not in keeping on the direct path, but in trying to invent any other."

"I never take a thing more than is absolutely necessary," remarked Mr. Crinks. "With a knife, a bit of string, and a walking-stick. I would go from here to the source of the Niger. Look at those people going by upon mules. Very good. They pay ten francs to frighten themselves to death and show us the way."

"Is it unpleasant, sir," asked Titus, "travelling upon mules to the top of the Rigi?"

"Rather exciting than unpleasant," answered Mr. Crinks. "It is very like riding a donkey up and down the monument."

After a slight repast of some bread and fruit with a bottle of *vin du pays* at the inn, our party started forth to commence the ascent of the sky-saluting mountain before them. For the first twenty minutes after leaving Art their road lay through smiling meadows and rich orchards, dotted with *châlets*, and pasturing large quantities of cattle, each of whom carried a mellow-sounding bell round his neck; and the effect of many hundreds of these, gradually softening in the distance, with the occasional *ranz des vaches* from the rude horn of the cow-boy, was indescribably beautiful in the calm, bright afternoon. Then the path began to ascend, as it became more rugged and tortuous, and the little stream of water at the side, which had rippled merrily through the meadows, formed itself into a succession of crystal cascades, tumbling over the blocks of granite—the *debris* of former convulsions—which each instant obstructed its downward progress. Mr. Ledbury, who had bought a mountain pole, with a chamois horn and iron spike *proper*, marched onwards, with the air of a hardy mountaineer upon an expedition of great importance and labour, humming snatches of Anglo-Helvetian melodies, followed by Jack, who was taking it very coolly, as he usually did everything. Mr. Crinks brought up the rear, not keeping to any particular path, but jumping from block to block, and starting off on one side or the other, whenever he saw anything worth collecting—a bit of mineral, or a blossom of the *Colchicum autumnale*, which was now in full flower. And in this order they progressed, until they came to the first landing-place of the mighty flight of stairs that leads to the summit, where they stopped for a few minutes to collect their breath and gaze upon the prospect—scarcely aware that they had already attained such an elevation. The little inn at Art, and the Lake of Zug, were far below them; and on their right the fatal valley of Goldau (on which the Rossberg mountain fell in 1806, eternally burying upwards of four hundred human beings beneath its fragments) was visible from one end to the other of its desolate extent.

There was a shepherd's hut on this landing, and several travellers had stopped to rest, and revive themselves with milk, fruit, and other pastoral refreshments. Amongst these was an exceedingly pretty English girl upon a mule, with an ancient French lady of severe aspect and maidenly deportment, something between a nun and a governess, who appeared to look very sharply after her charge. They had been amongst the passengers in the boat from Zurich, and Mr. Crinks had discovered that the young lady had been at school there, but was now going to join her family, living at the British settlement of Interlachen, who were to meet her at Lucerne. She bowed slightly as she recognised her fellow-travellers, for etiquette is not over tight-laced upon the mountains; and, finding they were English, would possibly have allowed them to address her in any polite commonplace remark upon the scenery or excursion, had not the *gouvernante* assumed a face very like the expression of a person eating an olive for the first time, and appeared anxious to depart. Whereupon Mr. Crinks, who declared it almost fatigued him to sit down, and had, consequently, rested himself by climbing about the neighbouring rocks, gave the order to march once more, disturbing Mr. Ledbury, who had thrown himself upon a log opposite the young lady, with his stick and knapsack, in the attitude of travellers in vignettes and songs, who are always gazing from a height, with a limited quantity of personal effects tied up in a bundle by their sides.

"What a pretty girl!" observed Mr. Ledbury, as he reluctantly rose from his incipient dream of romance.

"Now, don't give way to any mere susceptibilities, Leddy," said Jack. "Your love-adventures invariably have such unfortunate terminations that you cannot be too circumspect."

Forests of pine and deep ravines succeeded the orchards, then came mountain-pastures and woods of larch; and still they went up, up, up, until after four hours' toil they arrived at the end of their journey, and stood at the doorway of the Rigi Kulm Hotel, gazing upon that wondrous panorama, which at first sight bewilders the senses of the spectator, even to painful confusion. Ledbury and Johnson appeared struck with awe at the sublime view; and it was only the voice of Mr. Crinks, telling them they had better secure beds whilst there were any to be had, that recalled them back to the sensations of every-day life.

And they did right to lose no time in getting chambers; for, as usual, the Kulm was as full as it could hold. Indeed, when first Jack entered the *salle-à-manager* he began to wonder where on earth all the guests would get to at night. But the Kulm Hotel resembles a carpet bag: it is never so full but that something else might be crammed into it; and the architecture of the old establishment is so economical of space, and ship-like, that antiquaries have sometimes thought the Rigi must have been the Ararat of the Ancients, whereon Noah's ark, having settled, and being left high and dry by the waters, was in time converted into its present form. It is otherwise certainly very difficult to conceive how it ever got up there. Our travellers were fortunate enough to secure a little cabin, with two camp beds, Mr

Crinks preferring to sit up all night, that he might start betimes in the morning.

There was a very excellent supper, of which some forty guests partook, including the young lady and her duenna, to the former of whom Jack and his companion paid great attention, in spite of all the gouvernante's frowns and looks of horror. Mr. Crinks, not finding room at the table, sat upon an inverted plate-basket at the sideboard, where he appeared just as happy, and flirted with the hostess, who was (and we hope is still) a most attractive specimen of Swiss beauty; and a tolerable band of music, at least for the elevation, played during supper. Altogether, considering they were in the clouds, everything and everybody looked very merry and comfortable, except one gentleman, who, apparently bent upon making an effect, had come up in glazed boots kid gloves, and a white waistcoat, and appeared to have found out his mistake. All the rest were as chatty and good-tempered as the excitement of their situation, so far above the world, led them to be; and it was with some regret that the party at last broke up to seek their respective dormitories—a most facetious voyage of discovery.

The principal object of a visit to the summit of the Rigi being to see the sun rise, there are very praiseworthy arrangements at the hotel for keeping all the inmates wide awake until the morning. First, the unfortunate visitors who arrive too late to get beds establish extempore Travellers' Clubs in the *salle*, and incline to conviviality and harmony throughout the night. Then the thin fir walls of the rooms, in common with all *châteaux*, are so tight and drum-like that a knock upon the most distant reverberates all along the range with equal force. And as the muleteers and mules appear to rest together, and disagree continuously about room, it may be conceived that all these disturbances combined have the desired effect. But, besides all this, an unearthly horn is blown at every bedroom door half-an-hour before sunrise, to warn the guests that this important time is approaching; and the performer never came out in greater force than at the entrance of the chamber of Mr. Ledbury and his friend.

"I say, Jack, get up," said Titus. "I hear them moving, and there's a light in the passage."

As he opened the door to procure it, he encountered Mr. Crinks, who had been pleased to blow the horn that morning, having been convivial all night long.

"That's right," said Mr. Crinks. "Look alive, or the sun will be up before you. It's freezingly cold, so I have come to borrow a counterpane to wrap round me."

"They find you ten sous far taking out the counterpanes," said Jack, reading a notice on the wall.

"Never mind," said Crinks. "You don't know what it is out of doors—I do. I advise you to have five-penn'orth apiece."

Acting upon his suggestions they hastily dressed, and, enveloped in the counterpanes and blankets, crept out in the open air. Many of the guests had already assembled, and were walking about in the fog to keep warm, or buying cups, paper-knives, salad-spoons, and

rulers of the peculiar white and tinted wood stamped with the word "Rigi" in attenuated letters, as if they had been nipped up by the cold. Others had climbed up a species of wooden observatory, thinking they should see the sun sooner from this point; and the lights in the little pigeon-hole windows of the inn proved that nearly all were on the *qui vive*. Amongst the spectators was their pretty fellow-traveller from Zurich, looking as fresh and rosy as only English girls can look; and she was received with much gallantry and the most courteous salutes by our travellers, who were delighted to find her chaperon had not risen.

At last, after much shivering and impatience, the sun obliged the company by rising, first lighting up the peaks of the highest mountains with his rosy tints, and then stealing down their sides, until the lower world became illuminated. It was certainly a magnificent sight, and repaid all the trouble taken to behold it; but, this over, the spectators hurried back to their rooms, and for the most part went to bed again, except those who were preparing to start upon their downward journey.

"Whew!" how sharp the air is!" exclaimed Mr. Crinks. "May I beg to be allowed to make my toilet in your room?"

"Certainly," said Jack, "if you can get in. We are obliged to stand on the beds while we open the door. The room is about as big as a bathing-machine."

"Well, make haste," said Mr. Ledbury. "I shall be a walking glacier presently!"

"Chevy! who gets there first?" shouted Mr. Crinks; "Hi! hi! hi!" and off they started towards the hotel at full speed, Mr. Ledbury taking the lead. They shot through the door, knocking over some people who were coming out behind time, and rushed upstairs like wildfire into the corridor.

"Here's the room," cried Titus, as he pushed open the door.

"First!" cried Jack, going suddenly ahead, giving a spring like a harlequin, and leaping on to the bed opposite the open doorway.

"Second!" shouted Mr. Crinks, following him, as if he was playing the old school-game of "jump little nagtail."

"Third!" exclaimed Mr. Ledbury, as he also leapt on to the bed.

And then a piercing shriek of a female in distress sounded in their ears. The dreadful truth burst upon them ere another instant had passed; for sitting up in the bed at their side, with a head-dress of pocket-handkerchief and black ribbon, screaming "*Aux secours!*" at the top of her voice, was the French governess!

They had mistaken the room.

CHAPTER LV.

THE PASS OF THE ST. GOTHARD—LEDBURY AND JACK ARRIVE
AT MILAN.

THE screams of the French *gouvernante* at the unexpected intrusion of Mr. Ledbury and his companion threw the whole of the hotel into an instantaneous state of alarm. But the moment our friends saw the terrible mistake they had committed, they lost no time in explanation or apology, but bolted from the room as speedily as they had entered it, and gained their own adjacent chamber, just as a head protruded from every door, along the corridor. And no sooner were they assured of their safe retreat than Jack broke out into an uncontrolled fit of laughter, which entirely took away his breath, to the great agony of Mr. Ledbury, who was perfectly scared; whilst Mr. Crinks, hastily pulling a nightcap over his head, peeped out of the door, and inquired, in tones of great flurry and unconsciousness, the nature of the disturbance, or, as he more simply put the question, "What's the row?" To his great delight, nobody appeared capable of giving him any information thereupon, and he closed the door again. But the old lady still cried out with great force; and, having waited until someone came to her assistance, went into hysterics, from which, as violent attacks require violent remedies, she was only recovered by the administration of a powerful dose of lump-sugar in water; of which saccharine drug three knobs were discovered in her purse by the chamber-maid and her pupil, who had by this time returned. For your sugar is, with the French, a medicine of great importance; and, independently of its therapeutical properties, forms with water a convivial beverage, which cheers without intoxicating; and is, from its comparatively small expense, amazingly popular at private *réunions*.

But, although they had not yet been discovered. Johnson thought there was no occasion to run the risk of being identified; so they finished their toilets with great speed, and came down to the *salle-à-manger*, where several of the travellers were already at breakfast. Fresh eggs, delicious honey, cottage bread, and excellent coffee were delicacies not to be trifled with at an elevation of six thousand feet above the level of the sea; and, although Titus was amazingly nervous and anxious to get off, yet Mr. Crinks was bent upon breakfast, in which resolve he was seconded by Jack. But, however, the meal was soon despatched, and then paying their bill, and taking up their knapsacks they once more started off upon their pilgrimage.

It was a fine bright morning, and the fresh mountain wind was blowing and roaring round the Kulm, as if it wished to annihilate the Rigi for daring to lift its summit to so high an elevation in the clouds, which were the wind's own peculiar dominion, and now and then hurried across the path in misty volumes, one after the other, until they sailed far off with the breeze, to hide themselves from the sun

in the deep shadows of the peaks on the Bernese Oberland. Then at times the clouds shut out the surrounding mountains altogether from the view, and directly afterwards they rolled away like the scenes of some pantomimic vision, revealing the snowy tops of the neighbouring Alps, glittering in the morning sunlight against the azure sky.

Intending to descend to the village of Weggis, upon the lake of Lucerne, our tourists left the path they had followed on the previous evening at the Staffel—an inn some fifteen minutes' walk from the Kulm—and struck out into a new route. Mr. Crinks, who had not been to bed at all, did not appear in any way fatigued, but was quite as lively as when they had met him on the Zurich steamer the day before. Jack Johnson bore him excellent company in his various concerts; and Mr. Ledbury's self-possession returned in proportion as they left the Kulm behind them, until at last they triumphed over all his fears of being arrested for an assassin, and forthwith hung upon the spot, or shot by bows and arrows—not being exactly aware what course Swiss law usually took in similar cases. So they went merrily down the mountain, making a much shorter journey of it than they had done in ascending, and being enabled to watch the progress of a steamboat on the lake below them, as it left its tiny track of white behind it, stretching far away over the deep blue water, and was gradually making for the little village of Weggis, where they intended to embark for Altorf.

Mr. Crinks promised them his company to the top of the St. Gothard Pass, where he said he must quit them for the road to the glaciers of Grindelwald; and, in about twenty minutes after they got to Weggis, the steamer came up from Lucerne, and took them on board. There was previously a great deal of trouble to get the boat alongside the pier, for she seemed to have a tolerably independent method of her own with respect to her course; but at last this was accomplished, and then the captain, who stood on the paddle-box, wearing a straw hat with a tin anchor tied on it, which he appeared, in the words of Mr. Crinks, to think no inferior malt beverage of, cried out—

“Turn hed—forvuds!”

“What does he call that?” asked Titus; “it sounds like English.”

“It is meant for it,” replied Jack. “You may depend upon it, the engineer is an Englishman.”

“I hope he is,” replied Mr. Ledbury. “We shall get some information from him.”

And to his gratification, as soon as the boat was fairly started, a very black face appeared through one of the iron coal-shoots upon deck, and then the entire man rose through it, after the manner of Mr. Wieland, when he comes up a circular trap where nobody expects him. Any doubt as to the country to which the individual belonged was immediately dispelled by his touching his hat to the tourists, and observing—

“Fine morning, gentlemen.”

“What time shall we get to Fluelyn?” asked Jack, in reply.

“Not afore the middle of the day, I reckon,” answered the engineer. “They don’t put themselves out of the way much here; they give you plenty of time to see the scenery, they does.”

“Is the captain a Swiss?”

“Regular born,” answered the man; “only I’ve learnt him English. He knows three words capital: you heard two of ’em when we set off.”

“I thought that was meant for English,” observed Titus.

“In course it was. When I first come here, and he wanted to stop, he used to call me ‘long sam.’ ‘Do you want it to stop?’ says I. ‘Long sam,’ says he. I always laughs when I thinks of it. ‘Stop,’ says I; ‘Lang sam,’ says he—ha! ha! ha!”

At which facetious reminiscence, the engineer laughed aloud—our friends joining as people often do, from courtesy, although they did not see the exact piquancy of the joke.

“Have you been here long?” inquired Mr. Crinks.

“Above a bit,” answered the other. “I was first on the Chivity Vecchy station, and then in the Gulf of Venus to Triest; but I likes this best—there’s so many of our country people always about here.”

“I suppose you have a great number constantly passing backwards and forwards?” said Jack.

“Not much else, I reckon,” answered the engineer. “Lord bless you! It’s all very well to say Nature made Switzerland what it is—I mean to say it’s the English. Them big hotels would all be teetotally bamboozled if we was to go. I see some queer sorts here, though, sometimes.”

“I presume,” said Mr. Ledbury, “that there are several varieties.”

“Uncommon. The best part hav’n’t the least notion of what they have seen, or where they are going; but they think they must be obligated to push on, as if they were doing a match against time, and so they don’t stop nowheres ever.”

“There’s a lady in the after part of the boat with a little dog,” observed Mr. Crinks. “I daresay she brought that from England with her.”

“Oh! that’s nothing,” said the engineer. “One lady last week brought a averdupoise with her in a cage.”

“A what?” inquired Jack.

“A averdupoise—them little birds from foreign parts.”

An attendant imp of darkness emerged from the depths of the boat at this moment, and requested the assistance of the engineer, who sank through the circular opening in the same mysterious manner as he had risen, and finally disappeared.

The lake of Lucerne, with its deep, still reaches, and border of grand and sombre mountains, is perhaps the most calculated of all the *lachen* of Switzerland to excite the admiration of the traveller; and Mr. Ledbury, who was of a romantic nature and enthusiastic temperament, sat at the head of the boat, as he had done upon the Rhine, with a guide-book in his hand, finding out the different localities. At last his face assumed a glow of animation, and he hummed an

air from *Guillaume Tell*, at the close of which he turned to Johnson and observed—

“That is the window of the Grütli, Jack. I begin to breathe the air of liberty.”

“So do I,” said Mr. Crinks; “and should like it much better if we were not to leeward of the dead flax there.”

“That is Tell’s chapel,” said Mr. Ledbury, not heeding the remark, and pointing to a little building like a summer-house, at the edge of the lake, on their left. “It was there he leaped ashore from Gessler’s boat.”

“Do you believe all that, Leddy?” asked Jack.

“Of course I do,” replied Titus. “We have got some pictures about it at home.”

“I suppose you are aware, though, there never was such a person as William Tell was represented.”

“Oh! you are joking, Jack,” said Mr. Ledbury.

“I am not, indeed. The whole story is one of the most singular make-ups that ever attained universal credence.”

“But there is the meadow of the Grütli,” said Mr. Ledbury, pointing to a verdant platform of some sixty acres, “where he met the conspirators.”

“He never did, I can assure you,” continued Jack. Three conspirators *did* meet on the Grütli, and plan the revolt; but their names were Fürst, Stauflach, and Mälehtal.”

“And who was Tell, then?”

“Nobody can find out. It is very doubtful whether there ever was such a person at all; and if there was, nobody knows where he was born, lived or died.”

“He must have been something like his effigy at Rosherville Gardens,” observed Mr. Crinks, “a man of straw. I have shot at him often—seven arrows for twopence. By the way, I never believed that ripstone-pippin business myself.”

“How very sorry I am that you told me all this, Jack,” said Mr. Ledbury. “You have destroyed all my romance, and I was looking forward to see the market-place at Altorf.”

“Well, you can see it now, just the same,” replied Mr. Crinks. “There is no law against looking at it as long as you like. We shall be there in a couple of hours.”

At last the steamer came to Fluelyn, the port of its destination, where our three tourists disembarked, and, without heeding the pressing invitations of the innkeepers to remain there for the night, pushed on at once towards Altorf. Mr. Ledbury, whose ideas of that village had been taken from a theatrical diorama, was somewhat disappointed at its forlorn appearance in reality; and the tall painted tower in the market-place ceased to interest him, as he was reassured by Jack that the apple, fabled to have been shot from the head of the juvenile Tell by his father, was as unsubstantial as the apple of his eye—all his eye, indeed, and nothing else.

It was still afternoon when they passed through Altorf. Not caring to stop there, they followed the St. Gothard road, and about

six o'clock in the evening arrived at Amsteg, where the ascent of the pass may be said to commence. Here a comfortable *auberge* received them; and, after a dinner of hashed chamois, trout, and cutlets, they retired to rest in a large three-bedded room. The early hour at which they had risen, and the change of scene they had experienced throughout the day, somewhat wearied them. Even Mr. Crinks confessed that he was fatigued; and the trio were soon lulled to sleep by the brawling of the Reuss, which tumbles over rocks and precipices for twenty or thirty miles, including its terrific leap at the Devil's Bridge, and roars and chafes through the gorge at Amsteg with an unceasing tumult that has obtained for it the name of the *Krachenthal*, or "Resounding Valley."

But Mr. Crinks was all alive before daylight the next morning; and the sun had scarcely risen when they started for the ascent of the St. Gothard—one of the finest of the Alpine roads, and perfectly worthy to rank on a level with the Simplon. It was a toilsome journey, but the succession of wonderful objects which every turn of the road presented banished all thoughts of fatigue. Now they rested on the parapet of some bridges so high above the torrent, and with apparently such little attachment to the rock, that the architect might have undertaken a contract very plausibly to build castles in the air; now Jack amused himself with rolling enormous blocks of granite to the edge of the precipices, over which he launched them, tearing and thundering down the gorge, snapping off young trees that came in their way like reeds, until they cleared the torrent in the extreme depth of the ravine with a bound that sent them some distance up the opposite side. And Mr. Ledbury, who occasionally chose the old mule-track in preference to the carriage-road, distinguished himself in several daring conflicts with obtrusive goats respecting a question of right of way, greatly to the diversion of his friends, who watched his progress from the heights. So that altogether, with deviations and loiterings, the journey took twice the ordinary time to accomplish, and it was nearly dark when they passed the awful span of the Devil's Bridge, and traversing the mere cornice of roadway leading from it, at last perceived the lights of the inn at Andermatt, about half a mile off, where they once more halted for the night.

On the following morning Mr. Crinks wished them good-bye, and started on his road to Meyringen, with an interchange of respective addresses in England, and all sorts of mutual promises to rout one another up on his return. A light snow had fallen in the night, and Ledbury's feet was somewhat galled with the hard walking of the previous days, so that he prevailed upon Jack to arrange with a return *vetturino*, who offered to take them down the pass for a comparatively small sum, and deposit them that same evening at Magadino, on the Lago Maggiore. The driver, who was something between an image man and a bricklayer's labourer, smoked pipes and sang songs all the way, in which he was joined by Jack Johnson, who sat on the box with him to see the country; whilst Mr. Ledbury, who had the inside of the *voiture* all to himself, put his legs on the opposite seat, and, wearing his hat knowingly on one side, took up the bearing of an English traveller of distinction. His reason for this proceeding

was to attract the attention of the female peasantry, who now gradually discarded their Swiss appearance, and assumed the dark eyes, olive skins, bright dresses, and sparkling head-gear of the south. And then one by one the *châlets* disappeared, and were replaced by white cottages and tall square towers, until every trace of Helvetia had departed, although they were still in one of its cantons. Next the names and signs changed. The *Hôtel de la Poste* became *Albergo della Posta*—the “general shop” mounted a small board, upon which the traveller read *Negoziò di Vino*, and finally, at Bellinzona, the town assumed every characteristic of Italy.

“We are a long way from home, Leddy,” observed Jack to his friend, as they were seated at supper in the inn of Magadino, overlooking the lake.

“I begin to doubt whether we shall ever get back again,” said Titus. “Let us drink all their healths.”

A bottle of creaming vino d’Asti formed the libation; and Jack drank to the Ledburys by name, but secretly felt that the whole pledge was meant for Emma. And then they were shown into a grand bedroom, with a fine fresco ceiling and a very dirty floor, wherein they remained until morning. We cannot say slept; for the night was so sultry that they were compelled to have the windows open, through which a legion of mosquitoes, and other winged abominations, entered from the lake, and carried on a determined war upon the travellers all night long, until Mr. Ledbury, for whom they appeared to affect a preference, knocked his face black and blue in fruitless attempts to immolate them on the altar of their idolatry—his own proper head.

The worn-out tub which creeps from Magadino to Sesto Calende, across the Lago Maggiore, is certainly the worst steamboat in the world. The engine is justly called a low-pressure one, inasmuch as it cannot be trusted with more than two pounds and a half upon the square inch without exploding; and as there is only one cylinder, if the piston-rod chances to stop when perpendicular, there is no sustained momentum to bring the crank down again. This was the case when Jack and Titus embarked, and the crew ingeniously remedied the defect by opening a trap-door at the top of the paddle-box, and kicking the wheel on with their feet until they got it to go. But still the rod worked a little out of suit, coming down every time with a thump against the bottom that shook the entire boat, and deranged the complacency of everybody on board; except two priests, who took out their well-thumbed cornerless books the moment the boat started, and established a mass all to themselves at the side of the bowsprit, occasionally indulging in a little vocal harmony for the edification of the passengers. And as the engine took eight hours to do about fifty miles of work, although the scenery on the edge of the lake was very picturesque, yet its monotony became wearisome after a time, and Jack was not sorry to land with his companion at Sesto Calende, where they first put their feet on Italian ground.

A large, unwieldy diligence, like an omnibus with a double row of seats on its roof, was waiting at the door of the hotel to start for Milan, and, to their great annoyance, they learnt that all the places were

taken. But as it was market-day, and there were a great many country carts about, Jack thought that it was not improbable some of them were going back on the road, so he started off to see if he could make a bargain, leaving Titus to superintend the examination of their knapsacks at the custom-house. Mr. Ledbury was exceedingly polite to the officials, imagining Italy to be one vast country of bridges of sighs and brigands, and answered "*Oui*" to everything they said, although he did not understand them, especially in some long injunction, in which the word *passa-porta* was very prominent. But he caught the sound, and, looking in his pocket, found the document was all safe, and so imagined everything was right and proper.

By the time he had packed up the knapsacks again, Jack returned with a light cart, the owner of which had agreed to take them both, for a small sum, as far as Rho, a village seven or eight miles from Milan, and twenty from Sesto Calende. This was about a four hours' trip through a flat country, bordered with rice-fields and villages; and when they arrived at their journey's end, the heat was so intense that Mr. Ledbury declared all thoughts of marching under his knapsack to Milan in the dust and glare were quite out of the question. With some little trouble Jack procured the solitary mule of the village, and mounting Titus thereon, he slung the knapsacks over the crupper, like panniers, and walked by his side, an urchin running behind to bring back the animal.

At last the traceried pinnacles of Milan Cathedral were visible before them in the glowing sunset; and a fine straight road, bordered with trees, led up to the magnificent *Arco della Pace*, at the end of the great Simplon route. As they passed through the barrier a *douanier* came out and demanded their passports, which were directly furnished. The man returned to the office, and, after some delay, appeared again, telling them they must consider themselves in custody, as their credentials had never been visée'd at Sesto Calende! In an instant, Mr. Ledbury's ideas of Austrian dungeons and life imprisonments returned with terrible force; and he felt so extremely nervous that he almost fell from his mule.

"Why, how is this?" asked Jack, somewhat enraged. "I thought you would see to everything whilst I looked after the cart at Sesto. Here's a scrape you have led us into!"

"I see it all," said Mr. Ledbury, wildly clasping his hands in despair, and trying to move the pity of the guard by an imploring look. "They told me something about my passport, but I could not understand them. I thought they asked if I had got it. What will they do to us? Oh! dear—dear! to think of such an end to our excursion!"

"They will send us to prison," returned Jack, half in joke, half serious; "perhaps the galleys—who knows?"

Mr. Ledbury gave a groan of anguish, and remained silent. A small body of the guard, in their curious blue-tights and lace-up boots, now turned out of the *caserne*, and forming into order, requested our travellers to accompany them. Jack stuck his hands in his pockets and walked on, somewhat angrily, closely followed by Titus on the mule, whose additional burden of knapsacks gave the police an idea

that they had arrested some deserters. In crossing the Piazza d'Armi they fell in with the band, who were returning to the barracks, and, falling into their wake, constituted an imposing procession. As the music kept playing, a crowd of people collected, fixing all their attention upon the prisoners; and in this manner they were escorted through all the principal streets, until the convoy stopped at the grim-looking portals of the General Direction of Police.

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CHAPTER LVI.

MR. PRODGERS SEEKS TO ESTABLISH HIMSELF.

ABOUT three weeks after the *fête* given by the De Robinsons, at which Mr. Prodgers had so ably assisted, that gentleman was pronounced by his "grinder" sufficiently crammed to present himself for examination at Apothecaries' Hall, whilst his knowledge was piping hot, before he lost it. For it is a pleasant thing connected with medical examinations that nearly all the subjects which they embrace may be discarded from the mind the instant the ordeal is over, without the least detriment to any future professional career. And, since there are at this day individuals sufficiently talented to cure measles without knowing the difference between dandelions and buttercups, or to reduce dislocations without being able to make thermometers, the rest is as well forgotten. Neither is there the least occasion to know where rhubarb and bark come from, beyond where it can be retailed cheapest.

Mr. Prodgers obtained his diploma; and after a month's holiday in the country, in which he saw quite enough of the discomforts of rural practice to dissuade him from ever having anything to do with it, returned to town in search of a settlement. A great many "eligible opportunities" presented themselves, but the majority were from individuals whose only property was a brass-plate, with their name thereon; and with this they migrated about, screwing it upon their doors, until they enticed somebody to buy a practice "capable of great improvement," when they moved somewhere else, and established another with the same view. At last one morning he received a note from Mr. Pattle, the successor to Mr. Rawkins, stating that his health would not allow him to practise any longer—the usual plea in cases of commercial atrophy, or wasting away—and that he should be happy to make arrangements with Mr. Prodgers, who already knew the neighbourhood, for the disposal of his business.

The transfer was soon concluded, and in three weeks Mr. Prodgers was master of the concern to which he had served his apprenticeship. Mr. Pattle, who had grand ideas, had removed all the retail portion of the surgery, in consequence of which he got nothing to do; but Mr. Prodgers, who began to think seriously of maintaining himself, restored the shop to its pristine state, in the total absence of pride

from his character. A new plaster-of-paris horse was put in the window; and the teeth, arrayed upon fresh black velvet, occupied the centre pane. Alluring boxes of "Prodgers' Pill of Vitality," in envelopes so gay that they looked as attractive as *bonbons*, were piled one upon the other in elegant pyramids; all the strengthening plasters, from twopenny infantiles to sixpenny adults, were displayed to public view; the large bottles were re-filled with coloured liquids, and their hieroglyphics newly gilt; and, lastly, Mr. Prodgers invested himself and twenty shillings in a dressing-gown of imposing pattern, every button of which had an air of medical responsibility. An ancient woman, of staid demeanour, regulated his domestic economy; and, since Bob had vanished into the warehouse some time back, after which all traces were lost of him, he hired another urchin for odd work. He let his second floor to a pupil at one of the hospitals, fresh from the country; and then seated himself quietly down, to wait for patients not informing any of his old friends of his abode, or they would have directly turned his house into a species of gratuitous tavern.

The first morning he regularly opened his shop he sold two ounces of salts and a black-draught, which he formally entered in the first leaf of his day-book; and the first night the bell roused him from his slumbers about two o'clock to go and bail his lodger, who had fallen into the company of ill-conducted students, and having indulged in fermented drinks, had committed various feats of unwonted valour, finally bivouacking in the Clerkenwell station-house. The next day he sold nothing; and the next night he was rung up by mistake to a parish patient. On the third morning the top of the "Pill of Vitality," was purchased from the pyramid; and besides this, he took out a tooth for Mrs. Pin's housemaid next door, sold her a plaster for her cough, and was even spoken to, to attend a case which might require his services some two months hence, for fifteen shillings—underselling Mr. Kooops by five, who had refused to come for less than a sovereign. This had been his best day, and, consequently at night he smoked two *principe* cigars, ordered oysters for supper, and made merry.

It was not long before he became known, for he had been a favourite with most of the patients in the time of Mr. Rawkins, and some of his old friends began to rally round him. A dyspeptic policeman chose to pay him out of his own pocket for advice and medicines, doubting whether Mr. Kooops understood his constitution; and this induced Mr. Prodgers to hang out a board, inscribed "Advice gratis from ten till eleven," by which means he got to make up several of his own prescriptions; for, of course, he always advised physic.

He had been in practice about a month, when, one night, or rather morning, he was awakened by a violent peal of the night-bell, which sounded as if it never intended to leave off. Jumping out of bed, and going to the window, he opened it, and asked who was there, and what they wanted.

"Is Mr. Prodgers at home?" inquired a muffled voice from one of two figures whom he discerned below.

"Yes—I'm Mr. Prodgers—who is it?"

"Please, sir, I want to see you directly," replied the voice.

Mr. Prodgers immediately hurried on his clothes, and catching up

the rushlight, went down to the surgery, making sure an important new patient required his services. Upon opening the door, two gentlemen entered, one of whom immediately exclaimed—

“So it is! I say, Prodgers, old fellow! you’re a sly fox—rather! But we’ve found you out, you see. I thought we should dig you up some day. How d’ye do?”

“Tweak!” cried Prodgers, as he recognised his friend, and did not know whether to be friendly or annoyed. “And Mr. Simmons too—what has brought you here?”

“Oh, we have come to make a call,” said Mr. Tweak, vaulting on to the counter, and sitting upon it as if he intended to stay.

“But it’s past three,” yawned Mr. Prodgers, looking at a Dutch clock, with a skeleton who mowed nothing perpetually over the dial, that hung in a corner of the surgery.

“Yes, we know,” said Tweak; “’tis the only leisure time we have for paying visits. Come—don’t be blinking at that rushlight—eh!”

“I think you had better go,” observed Prodgers, gravely.

“Oh, nonsense!” replied Tweak. “What are you going to stand?”

“I have not got anything.”

“Oh, yes you have,” continued his visitor. “Light the gas and boil some water. Here’s a saucepan.”

“Don’t do that,” exclaimed Prodgers; “that’s fresh black draught. Now, Tweak—there’s a good fellow—go home, and come again to-morrow.”

“We can’t,” remarked Mr. Simmons; “we have lost the key. Tweak threw it at a cat, and broke a kitchen window, so we couldn’t ask for it.”

“I shan’t go home,” continued Tweak. “Let’s drown care in a flowing bowl, and wreath our brows with camomile flowers.”

And, perfectly recollecting the position of the different drawers, he pulled out a handful of the camomiles, and threw them at Prodgers’ head.

“Now come, boys,” said Prodgers, trying the persuasive, “don’t make such a noise; I’ve got a lodger.”

“We’ll go and rout him up,” cried Tweak, seizing the rushlight.

“No, no!” exclaimed Simmons; “get a bit of string, tie his toe to the bed-post, and then cry fire. I have done it often—it’s out-and-out.”

“But look here, now,” interposed Mr. Prodgers, arresting the rushlight, “what do you really want?”

“Want?—nothing,” replied Tweak.

“Well, I don’t keep it,” answered the other. “What else shall I give you to go away?”

“Can you lend us two shillings?” asked Tweak.

“With great pleasure,” returned his friend, delighted at the chance of getting rid of his visitors. “Here they are, and there’s the door. Any other time I shall be delighted to see you. Good-night.”

Mr. Prodgers conducted his two friends to the doorway, and, with many expressions of gratitude to them for their departure drew the bolt and put up the chain after them, as they emerged from the surgery into the street. He then took his rushlight, and was returning upstairs

to bed, sorry that the visit had not proceeded from a new patient, but glad to get to sleep again, in a conflict of indolent and industrious feelings, when another violent ring at the night-bell sounded before he reached his chamber. He therefore descended again to the surgery, and inquired through the door what was wanted.

"It's us," exclaimed a voice—"Tweak and Simmons. We have come back all in a hurry. Open the door, Percy."

"Oh! don't!" cried Mr. Prodgers, in accents of despair. "Now go on—do!"

"No, no!" continued Tweak, speaking somewhat earnestly. "Here's a job—really—joking apart. Such a row!—there's somebody dead. Open the door!"

"It won't do," said Prodgers. "Besides, if they're dead, what is the use of a doctor?"

"Why, a guinea for the inquest," replied Tweak. "Indeed, Percy, it is no sell. Open the door, and make haste, or Koops will be there before you. The police are sure to go to him first. They say it's a woman."

There was something so anxious in the student's address that Prodgers directly unfastened the bolt and allowed them to enter. Again assuring him that no deception or practical joke was intended Tweak took his friend's hat from the counter, and forcibly thrusting it on his head, half-dragged him to the street.

"Round here," said he, as they turned the corner. "where you see that man going. Look at the lanterns."

In effect, several lights appeared collected together at the end of a narrow thoroughfare which led towards the New River, and as they came up to the spot they perceived a crowd of people surrounded the door of a public-house, composed chiefly of the police, and such idlers as were about at that advanced hour of the night.

A bystander soon gave Prodgers information as to the nature of the occurrence:—a body had been taken from the river, and they were conveying it on a shutter to the nearest inn.

"I heard the splash," said the man, "when I was at the corner of St. John Street, and I says to my pardner 'There's som'dy a-throwed thesselves into the water;' so we went back."

"And how did you get the body out?" asked Prodgers.

"Ah! there was the job, along of the railings. How she got in I can't tell; but they, poor things, must be desperate when they comes to this."

"It is a woman, then," observed Prodgers; and, pushing through the crowd, he continued, "I am a medical man: let me into the house."

A surgeon is always treated with deference by the crowd at an accident, and the people fell back, allowing him to enter, followed closely by Tweak and Simmons. The body had been placed upon the table, and the innkeeper was now squabbling with the police upon the impropriety of its being taken there.

"Now, don't be so crusty," said the inspector, who appeared to know the host. "If she's quite gone, you get the inquest; and if she ain't, you has a guinea."

"Was she long in the water?" asked Prodgers.

"A matter of five minutes," replied a man.

"Then there may still be a chance," said Prodgers. "Now, will you be good enough to clear the room?" he continued to the police.

"These gentlemen can assist me in all I want; and everybody else is in the way. Have you any females in the house?" he asked, addressing the innkeeper.

The man answered in the affirmative—his wife and the servants were upstairs.

"Then let them both be called, and tell them to bring down their blankets," said Prodgers. "Put a few chips in the fireplace—the boiler is still warm; and, for the second time, clear the room."

Besides the importance attached to every word which falls from the lips of a medical man in moments of pressing urgency—the almost supernatural power which he is supposed at such times to possess over the balance of life and death—besides this, his remarkable composure, when all about him is disordered and uncertain—his steady forethought and unruffled intelligence, which ceaseless intimacy with scenes of suffering and uncertainty alone can induce, tend still further to augment his influence. The people were directly ordered from the room, the proprietor re-kindled the fire on the still incandescent embers, and Prodgers, assisted by his friends, now orderly and tranquil, commenced his preparations for endeavouring to restore animation to the body before them.

"She's been a pretty girl," said the policeman, as he parted back the long wet hair from her face. "Poor thing!—the old story too."

As he spoke he drew his finger over her cold cheek, on which a dull red was visible upon the livid flesh below. The paint came off, and a white mark followed his hand.

The females, who had been called in the meantime, now came into the room. They were decent elderly women, and notwithstanding their extreme flurry, appeared anxious to afford every assistance. By the advice of Prodgers they quickly undressed the body, and enveloped it in the blankets they had brought with them; whilst the others made up the fire, and filled some bottles with hot water.

"Poor young creature!" said the landlady: "there's not a great deal in the pockets. Yes—here's some money and a letter."

"Give it to me," said Prodgers; and taking the document, he carefully unfolded the wet paper, and read the following note, bearing the date of the day before, and written in an irregular, but apparently disguised hand:—

"Dear Ned,

"'Pigey' will be with you to-morrow, and seems like to bleed. If you lift up the cloth of the table, and scrape the wood, you can make the middle pockets draw for the hazards. I have done the new moulds; send Letty for them after dark to-morrow night to the crib—they are slap up.

"Yours,

"THE MILLER.

"To Mr. Morris, at Matthews' Beershop,
Stevens' Rents."

"That's the house as we have been looking after, I'm certain," said the policeman; "the money's as bad as can be," he continued,

taking up the half-crown and biting it; "and all from the same stamp, with the same flaw. We've got 'em at last."

"Well, we have something else to think about now," said Prodgers, "You can keep the door, and I will call you when I want you."

And thus speaking, he turned his attention towards the body, commencing a series of simple operations, which the landlady, whose sole ideas of recovering drowned persons were confined to rolling them upon tubs, and holding them up by their heels, watched with incredulous expression of countenance.

They alone upon whom the responsibility has fallen of attempting to arrest the last gleam of flitting existence in its darkening tenement—to kindle by their own breath the dull remaining embers of life, which too eager or precipitate a course might extinguish for ever—who have felt they were regarded by the surrounding crowd as dispensers of life or death, upon whose will it depended whether the senseless object of their earnest care became once more a thing of vitality and reason like themselves, or a clod of decaying earth—they alone can understand the deep and all-absorbing feelings of the surgeon, whilst superintending the process of restoring suspended animation. The fearful anxiety which attends the result of each essay, as the clammy grasp of death seizes with firmer embrace upon its victim, until the last sad conviction that all is finished forces itself upon his mind: and the painful suspense ere the last throb of returning pulsation calls for renewed hope and exertion—those trying moments can be but faintly imagined beyond the circle of that profession whose pilgrimage on earth is doomed to pass but amidst the most distressing scenes of anguish and mortality.

And long and earnestly did Mr. Prodgers apply himself to his important task. The hand of the clock in the corner of the room crept round the smoke-discoloured dial; and as it progressed, hope ebbed away with every heavy beat of the pendulum, which still kept on its dull unchanging swing, as if to mark the triumph of time over mortality. But still no plan was left untried—no zeal relaxed that appeared likely to assist the process. With the fingers of one hand upon the pulse, and the other placed upon the chest, from whence it was but now and then removed, to examine the pupil of the half-closed eye, he directed his companions in their attempts to produce an artificial respiration; and for upwards of an hour did they persevere.

"Hush! whispered Prodgers, as if fearful of disturbing the silence even by his own voice. "I think the hand seems warmer. Perhaps it is only my fancy."

As he spoke he placed his ear upon the chest, in close contact with the skin, and listened attentively. You might have heard the spiders creep upon their lurking-places.

"There is a beat!" he cried joyfully, after a few seconds' pause; "another—the heart is acting! Now—do not lose an instant—she will come to, after all."

And, indeed, before long the girl showed signs of returning life. The skin lost the livid hue that had overspread it, and a few rapid convulsive sobs shook the chest. Then the temperature of the hands increased—slowly, it is true, but progressively; and the action of the

pulse commenced, in the irregular beating of a small, thread-like vessel, faint and intermittent, until it was distinct and regular, And in a few minutes a series of deep-drawn sighs ended in a copious flood of hysterical tears, which were cheerfully hailed as the signs of returning consciousness.

The woman placed a pillow underneath the head of the patient, and covered her with fresh blankets, converting the table into a rude bed. It was some little time before she became clearly sensible of her situation; but when the truth broke upon her, she again burst into tears. This time, however, they were natural.

The girl started up as the light broke upon her, and cast a wild glance round the room, and at its occupants. And then, as the cover-lids fell from her shoulders, she gathered them hastily around her, and clung towards the landlady, who was standing at her side, as if she claimed protection from some impending threat.

"Don't be frightened, deary," said the hostess, in a kind tone of assurance. "You are with friends here—nobody will harm you."

As she spoke, the girl fixed her eye upon the policeman, who was standing at the door. She gave a slight start of apprehension, and looked anxiously about the table.

"Where are—my clothes—my pocket?" she asked, in a faint voice.

"They are all safe," returned the landlady. "I have taken care of them. Do you think we may give her a little drop of cordial, doctor?" she continued, addressing Prodgers.

"It must be a very little," he replied. "And now see if you cannot get her to bed. She will still require some care."

"She shall go in mine," said the servant; "for it will be morning soon. I can stay with her till then."

"And I will come and see her again to-morrow," said Prodgers. Then turning to the proprietor, he added, "I suppose you can carry her to her bedroom?"

The man raised her in his arms, and prepared to carry her upstairs; but as he did so the girl once more asked for her clothes, some of which were steaming on the back of a chair before the fire. The landlady took them in her hand, and then the party went slowly from the room.

In two minutes the owner of the house returned, and "tendered a drop of something to drive the cold away" to Prodgers and his companions. Then, assuring him that every care should be taken of the unhappy girl, he supposed there was nothing more to be done, and wished them good-night, as they departed with the policeman.

"And now I shall go home to bed," said Prodgers, sleepily; "for I am very tired. You fellows had better come too."

"Well, I don't mind," said Mr. Tweak. "I don't see that I can go anywhere else."

"You are very lucky, gentlemen, to have finished all your work," observed the policeman, as they stood in the open air again. "Ours is just beginning."

"How so?" asked Prodgers.

The man took the note from his pocket which had been found upon the girl, and throwing the glare of his lantern upon it, replied—

“Because this puts us up to somebody we have been after for the last twelvemonth. We must be off directly to Somers Town.”

“I hope you will be successful,” replied Prodgers. “Good-night.”

And, as the police turned off along the side of the river, Prodgers, Tweak, and Simmons bent their steps, with weary limbs and half-closed eyes, towards the residence of the first-named gentleman.

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CHAPTER LVII.

GOOD FORTUNE COMES TO JACK—A DANGEROUS DILEMMA AT MILAN.

UPON being introduced to the police, it required all Jack's knowledge of foreign tongues to make the authorities understand that Ledbury and himself were not deserters, but that the irregularity in their passports were solely attributable to their own ignorance of the *visées* that would be required, having forgotten that they had passed from Switzerland to Lombardy. But the Austrian police are not very easily satisfied; and after much wrangling and uncertainty, during the whole of which time Mr. Ledbury believed the next minute would see him being escorted to the galleys, the authorities finally determined that our travellers should deliver up their present informal passports as hostages, and should consider themselves, at the same time, under the surveillance of the police, without permission to leave Milan until the pleasure of the Government should be made known to them. They were then allowed to depart.

By the recommendation of an Anglo-Italian courier who was waiting at the bureau, they proceeded to the Albergo della Croce Bianca, a neat second-rate inn in the Corso di Porta Vercellina, one of the gendarmes accompanying them to note down their residence. Jack was at first exceedingly annoyed, for it was uncertain how long they might be detained in the city; but the feelings of Titus still bordered upon despair. The master of the inn, however, a comfortable Milanese, who spoke the worst French possible, assured them they had nothing to fear, and at the same time ventured to suggest that a good dinner might somewhat tranquillise their excitement. And this had the desired effect, as much from its excellence as its novelty; for they dined in the open air, in the court of the inn, which had galleries running round it, like our coaching hotels in London, but covered with luxuriant grape-vines. The evening was so lovely that the flame of the candles never wavered; and *vetturini* were arriving and departing the whole time; whilst several small tables were placed about, at which visitors were drinking, chatting, or playing endless matches of that peculiar Italian game of fingers which somewhat resembles our schoolboy sport of “Buck, buck—how many horns do I hold up?” All this afforded great amusement to Jack and Titus, who, after a short stroll in the city, always gay and well-peopled in the evening,

returned home to bed and slept very soundly after the toils and annoyances of a very long day.

The next morning, having made their toilets with as much nicety as their slender wardrobes would allow, they started off to fulfil the object of their journey, and procure the required signature to the document with which old Mr. Ledbury had entrusted them. Mr. Howard, who had a pleasant *casino* just within the Porta Orientale, received them very politely; and, when he heard of their awkward situation, begged that during their stay at Milan they would make his house their own. He was much taken with Jack's intelligent and frank manner; and so well did they agree, that before two days had passed, having questioned Titus somewhat closely as to his friend's testimonials, it was arranged that, upon their return to England, if Johnson chose to become Mr. Howard's agent in London, there was a clear two hundred a year for him as long as he proved deserving of the trust. And this was a piece of fortune Jack never in his wildest dreams looked forward to. Indeed, he went back to the inn in such a whirl that passports, police, and Austrian prisons were alike forgotten: he thought only of his return to England, and above all, the opportunity of making a proud and independent proposal to old Mr. Ledbury for the hand of his daughter. And Titus, with his good heart, entered into all his friend's happiness. It was fate, he was sure, that had first thrown them together, and that had induced them to take this lucky journey; and, if he had only got his passport all comfortably *en règle*, he would not have one thing else in the world to care about.

In a day or two after their arrival Mr. Howard was compelled to leave Milan for Padua, where his presence was required upon the projected line of railway. Our travellers dined with him the last evening, and then he gave Jack the necessary introductions and documents for him to enter upon his new office when he returned to England. Jack, who had attended every day at the passport office without effect, made some allusion to the probability of their still being detained at Milan when he returned, but was again assured by Mr. Howard that all would be settled well, although they did not hurry themselves about such things. And, having accompanied him to the office of the *relociferi*, or conveyances at six miles an hour, they saw him into the diligence, which left for Verona, Padua, and Venice, at eleven at night, and then went back to the Croce Bianca.

A lively scene awaited them at the inn. A party of wandering minstrels, consisting of three men and a girl, had just come to Milan from the fair at Breschia, one of the largest in Northern Italy, and were playing on guitars in the court. Several of the young men who had been enjoying themselves in the *café* attached to the inn now came out, and pushing the tables on one side, asked a girl to waltz, which she did with them, one after another. Then two or three more females made their appearance—chiefly *grisettes*, or rather, those who would have been called *grisettes* in Paris—from the adjacent shops: and at last the dance became general, involving so many flashing eyes and ankles that Mr. Ledbury was well-nigh beside himself. The girl who accompanied the musicians was very beautiful—so handsome indeed,

that, with an attendant goat, she might well have passed for a second Esmeralda ; and the men who were with her took advantage of her comeliness to send her round for money after each performance. Ledbury was drinking wine at a table with Jack, and, with his usual susceptibility, the girl's eyes so shot him through and through that *zwanzigers* and *kränzlers* were falling into the small tray she presented for contributions as fast as he could take them from his pocket, in return for which she gave him such bewitching smiles, such mellifluous "*Grazie signores*," that Jack soon saw his interference would be necessary to keep Titus within bounds.

"Now keep cool, Titus," said Jack. "Recollect what I have so frequently told you. Your love-making always brings you into trouble."

"I know," remarked Mr. Ledbury ; "it's all right. Have some more wine, Jack. I shall ask her to dance the Tarantella."

"My good fellow," returned Jack, aghast, "what on earth do you know about the Tarantella?"

"I have seen it danced in *Masaniello*, at the theatres," answered Mr. Ledbury. "I think I should make a hit."

"You would make a fool of yourself, Leddy, and get into the same scrape that you did at Paris. Let me recommend you not to try any such thing."

"Well, I suppose I may ask her for a quadrille?" resumed Titus.

"Oh, quadrille away," said Jack, laughing at his friend's pliant disposition. "Dance hornpipes, or anything you like. I see you are a lost man."

As Ledbury rushed forward to request the girl's hand, or rather her waist, such being the prevailing style for the quadrille, another gentleman approached her at the instant for the same object. The second cavalier was very handsome ; but the girl's affections inclined towards Mr. Ledbury's liberality, and, although the other certainly had the start in addressing her, she put down her guitar and took Mr. Ledbury's arm. The set immediately formed, and the rejected gentleman returned to the table, rather cross than otherwise.

Mr. Ledbury could not speak to his partner with very remarkable fluency, so, in lieu of conversation, he assumed his most distinguished positions to create an impression, and danced with much elegance. All went on very well until the fourth figure, when the top and bottom couple were to go hands four round—not quietly, as we do it at home, but laying hold of each other with a tight grasp, and spinning round and round with considerable velocity. Titus kept up for the first revolution or two very well ; but presently he felt his hand slipping, and directly afterwards, leaving go his hold, he was whirled off by the centrifugal force, and shot, like a cinder from the fire, right on to the table where the rejected cavalier was sitting, amidst all the glasses and wine-bottles.

Of course there was a "row" immediately. The man commenced abusing Ledbury in no very measured terms ; and Titus, from his ignorance of the language, could return no answer. Whereupon Jack took up the cudgels for his friend as well as he was able, and turned all the wrath of the Italian upon his own head, which at last got so

excessively gross and ungoverned that Johnson would have nothing more to say to him. As he left the table, however, the man collected all his anger for an outbreak of passion, and applied such unpardonable epithets to his antagonist, that Jack, without more ado, turned back again and knocked him down. And then, seeing that he did not appear in any hurry to get up again, for fear of a repetition of the attack, Jack left him where he was, and, taking Ledbury by the arm, elbowed his way through the rest of the party before they well knew what had occurred, and marched up to their bed-room.

"We should have had to fight against long odds," said Jack, "it we had waited there a minute longer."

"You have hurt your knuckles, Jack," remarked Ledbury, calling his friend's attention to his hand.

"Never mind," said Jack; "it has given them a lesson. We shall be treated with respect in future, you may depend upon it. I see they are breaking up below," he continued, looking out of window. "No matter—we will not go down again."

As soon as their excitement was over, they prepared to go to bed, and were commencing to undress, when they heard a low hurried tap at the door of the room. Upon opening it, to their great surprise, they perceived the music-girl, who, apparently much flurried, begged Johnson to step downstairs for a minute or two. There was something so earnest in the request that he accompanied her directly, leaving Mr. Ledbury in a state of great wonder and uncertainty.

In three minutes he returned, evidently much embarrassed, as he replied to Mr. Ledbury's anxious question of what was the matter.

"Here's a devil of a business!" said Johnson, "as unlucky an affair as can well be."

"How?—for goodness' sake, Jack, tell us what you mean," exclaimed Titus, much alarmed.

"The fellow we had the row with is in the bureau of the police, and recollected us. One of the men who belongs to the music party heard him say as he left that we were detained here as it was, but three months in prison would not do us any harm."

"What for, Jack?" cried Ledbury, in an agony of terror.

"For the assault. It seems a blow is an awkward thing at Milan, and not likely to be looked over."

"We must leave the place immediately," said Titus.

"And where are our passports?"

This simple question destroyed all Mr. Ledbury's hopes at once. He asked wildly two or three times what would be done, and throwing himself on the bed, groaned aloud.

"Come, come, Ledly," said Jack, "this is of no use: let us see what chances are in our favour. The man with the guitar seems a good fellow enough. He says his party are off this night for a *fête* at Arona, on the Lago Maggiore, and that, if we can get clear of the city, he will take us on in his *carretta*. All the lot travel together."

"But how can we get away from the inn? It's nearly one o'clock in the morning."

"That is soon settled," replied Jack. "I will go and see about that part of the story, if you will pack up the knapsacks."

And so saying, Jack went downstairs, whilst Mr. Ledbury, in great confusion, collected their effects, and stuffed them into the knapsacks as well as his intense fright and *bouleversement* would allow him to do.

"I have made it all right at the inn," observed Jack, as he returned. The landlord thinks we are merely going with these people to see the *fête* at Arona, and shall return with them. He did not want me to pay him, but I insisted upon doing so. Are you all ready?"

"Quite," said Ledbury, as pale as death, and buckling the last strap of his knapsack.

"Then *en avant!*" cried Jack, whom the danger had excited until he was ready for anything; "and the devil catch the hindmost! I don't know whether he is not preferable to the Austrian police."

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CHAPTER LVIII.

THE FLIGHT OVER THE SIMPLON.

As they turned into the street leading to the Piazza D'Armi—the Hyde Park of Milan, if it may be so called—everything was still as the grave. The night was dark, but a few lamps were glimmering in the distance round the boundary-wall of the esplanade; and a light in the small building at the barrier gate guided them towards the arch at the end of the great Simplon road, through which their journey lay. As they approached it, great caution was necessary to avoid being seen by the guard; for their appearance and the late hour would have certainly caused them to be arrested.

"We must not go through the gate," said Jack; "they would be safe to see us."

"Then how are we to get out?" asked Ledbury.

"Climb the wall," was the laconic answer of Johnson.

Titus looked aghast at the wall, under whose shadow they were now consulting. It was twelve feet high, and perfectly plain.

"We can never get over that, Jack," he murmured in despair.

"Nonsense, man! see how I shall manage it. We must look out as sharply as we can for a tree that grows against it."

Still keeping close to it, they crept along until they came to one of the trees forming the inner belt of the enclosure, that was planted nearly close to it, with some overhanging branches. To run up it almost like a squirrel was to Jack the work of half a minute; and then hooking up the knapsacks with the chamois horn at the end of his staff, he proceeded to hook up Mr. Ledbury, which was a task of no ordinary difficulty. But Titus's long legs and arms somewhat aided him in the ascent, and at last they both crept along a limb and got to the top of the wall.

"Hush!" cried Jack, suddenly: "for God's sake don't move an inch. The patrol is coming round to change the guard. I can hear them."

"We shall be shot!" gasped Titus.

"Nonsense!—lie down at full length upon the top of the wall. They will be gone directly."

It did not take Mr. Ledbury much time to follow the directions of his friend. He clung to the wall as Jack observed, like a brick, and appeared almost a portion of it. After two minutes of keen anxiety the guard passed, and then Jack prepared to descend.

"What must we do to get down?" asked Titus. "I can't see the ground."

"We can't help that," replied Jack, "we must drop, at all events. Let us send out a pilot first."

So saying, he threw down the knapsacks, which fell noiselessly upon the grass; next letting himself down as far as his hands would allow him, he dropped safely to the ground; and then broke Ledbury's fall, who was so exceedingly nervous that he could scarcely lay hold of anything. This accomplished, they took up their knapsacks, and, cutting across a field to the Simplon road, found the party waiting to receive them, as agreed upon.

All Mr. Ledbury's gallantry had vanished, and although he sat next to the handsome singing girl in the *fourgon*, he never said a word, but remained in great terror all the journey. They did not travel very fast; the day was breaking when they arrived at the banks of the Lago Maggiore. Here their companions parted with them, after Jack had remunerated them somewhat liberally; and then he hired a boat to take them on board the steamer, soon after she had left Sesto Calende, by which means all chance of their being ask for their passports would be avoided.

As luck had it, the morning was very foggy, and in half-an-hour they were once more on board the rickety *Colombo*. When she arrived at Baveno they hired another boat immediately, as if to see the Isola Bella; because, Baveno being in Piedmont, if they had gone on shore they would have been discovered immediately. But, instead of going to the island, they ordered the man to proceed up the river Vedro, which flows into the lake from the Simplon. On arriving at a sequestered part of its bank they landed, and proceeded onward, having already cleared three *visées*, from either of which they would have been sent back under an escort to Milan.

It was now between ten and eleven o'clock in the morning: so they strapped on their knapsacks, and walked along the road until they were overtaken by a travelling carriage. As the inmates were asleep, the postilion smoking, and looking only over his horse's ears, and the rumble empty, Jack proposed that they should take possession of it, which, after running behind for some little distance, they did, and were carried as far as Vogogna, by one p.m. Here they crept down unperceived, and trudged on until the *voiture* again passed them, when they got up again. And following this plan at the different villages, they finally reached Domo Dossola about four, when they were both so fatigued that Jack determined to wait two hours for rest and refreshment, although Ledbury, in spite of being very exhausted, was anxious for them to keep still on the move.

The sun had gone down when they left Domo, and large dark patches

of clouds were coming angrily up from the windward, giving promise of a stormy night. For the first time Jack felt uncomfortable, although he kept his inquietude to himself; for he knew that the instant Ledbury saw his misgivings it would be all over with him. But yet he did not disguise the fact that an arduous journey was in prospect.

"Do you see those mountains?" he asked, pointing to the terrific Simplan before them, whose outline was now rapidly fading in the approaching darkness. "Well, we must cross them before to-morrow morning. They do not look very inviting."

The dinner had somewhat refreshed them, and they speedily traversed the last of those highly-cultivated plains which form so remarkable a contrast to the mountain-road directly beyond them. It was soon dark, and by the time they had got to the foot of the pass, and ascended the first rise to the magnificent Pont de Crevola, they could not see the turbulent Vedro, which rushes past the mighty single pillar of masonry, although its deafening roar told them that it was still hurrying on its rapid course. Neither of them spoke much, for the commencing ascent made heavy demands upon their breath, without wasting it in words; and, in addition to this, Mr. Ledbury was in a state of extreme terror, as the scenery became wilder, and the brawling of the torrent at the side of the road more angry, whilst it leaped over and amongst the huge blocks of granite which intercepted its course, that he did not feel at all inclined to open his mouth, but kept close to Jack, especially when they passed any of the gloomy galleries under which the road is carried at several parts of the passage. And then the scenery got still more wild and savage—doubly frightful by the gloom in which it was enveloped. The last traces of cultivation which here and there clung in patches about the sheltered places on the rocks disappeared—one by one the *châlets* and mountain-inns were left behind, until no buildings appeared but the dismal Refuge, or the small and only chapel—both tokens of hazard and uncertainty. And still they kept ascending—unalteringly, steadily ascending—until they entered the appalling gorge of Isella, impaled by its perpendicular barriers of granite, from whose summits cascades of water, icy cold, were tumbling in all directions, now carried under the road to increase the already swollen Vedro, and now rushing across the pass, with a force that threatened to carry them off their legs, did they slip from the perilous stepping-stones, whose situation they could scarcely determine by feeling with their poles before they ventured forward. And then their path ran close by the side of the torrent, which, overlapping its bounds, or impeded in its course, threatened every minute to engulf them in its whirling hell of waters, that every now and then swept over what was three years ago a fine and level carriage-way.

At length the road quitted the river, and climbed up the side of the gorge, leaving the water far beneath it. As the noise diminished in the distance, Mr. Ledbury felt somewhat reassured, and hazarded a few questions about the localities. A few stars, too, were beginning to peep out from the sky above the ravine, and presently the hour of ten sounded from some steeple in the direction they were journeying.

"We have been four hours on the road, Jack, already," observed Titus. "I'm glad we are coming to something like life again."

"You would not be so happy if you knew what place it was," replied Johnson. "This must be Gondo, the Sardinian frontier. Now we shall have to look sharp enough. How are your eyes, Leddy?"

"Rather sleepy," returned Titus, giving a yawn in confirmation.

"Oh, come," said Jack, "you must not think of anything of that sort yet. We have scarcely done a third of our journey."

As they turned an angle of the road, a bright ray of light shot across the path from a building a little way ahead, and the dark outlines of one or two military-looking figures were plainly visible.

"There they are," exclaimed Jack, hurriedly.

"Who?" asked Mr. Ledbury; "the Austrian police?"

"No, no—the *douaniers*. If they see us, we are done for. We must try and pass the custom-house some other way."

"I do not see how," said Titus.

"Nor I either," returned Johnson. "Let us reconnoitre."

At first he thought of attempting to climb down the carriage-way to the level of the river, and keep along its side until the frontier was passed; but the descent was so deep and precipitous that this plan was directly abandoned. Going along the road was to ensure instant detection; for the authorities on boundaries have sharp eyes and ears, so that the only plan left was to endeavour and pass behind the *douane*, which was built nearly against the high granite rocks that hemmed in the gorge. Telling Ledbury to use every caution Jack led the way walking with no little difficulty upon the slanting ground which rose directly from the road. They soon came up to the building, and passed so close behind it that they could look into the room, where one or two of the officials were lying carelessly down upon a wooden couch, or huddling round a fire. Ledbury followed Jack in silence, but quite mechanically. The whole business had brought about such an overturning of his ideas, not suited to such exciting excursions, that if anyone had asked him whether he was marching upon his head or his heels, it would have taken some little time for him to collect his intellects, and return a proper answer. Jack was less flurried; and when they once more gained the road on the other side of the station, and felt somewhat assured, he indulged in a little pantomime, less elegant than expressive, spreading his thumb and fingers into radii, and raising them to a level with his nose, in the direction of the *douane*, indicative of triumph and intellectual superiority.

"So far so good," observed Jack. "Now, Leddy, brisk up. Take a pull at the wicker bottle, and start off again."

A small quantity of cognac infused a little fresh energy into Mr. Ledbury, and he walked on with his friend through the gloomy and miserable village of Gondo, and by its high prison-like inn, now wrapped in repose. There was a building which Jack supposed to be the office on the Swiss frontier; but no lights were visible, and they passed by without any interruption.

As they left the wretched *châlets* of the hamlet behind them, they appeared to take leave of the habitable world, and advanced into the celebrated but awful Gorge of Gondo. It was now nearly midnight,

and quite dark ; whilst, to increase their perplexity, it began to rain as the stars went in. On arriving at the Grand Gallery, Jack proposed that they should rest for a short time under its shelter, to which Ledbury gladly agreed, taking off their knapsacks for the ten minutes they were there, and sitting upon them.

"Well, this is an excursion we never anticipated," said Jack. "However, it will be something to talk about when we get home."

"Home !" exclaimed Mr. Ledbury, despondingly. "I only wish we may. How cold it is getting."

"Because we are up very high," said Jack. "You will find the rain, will turn to sleet before long, and finally to snow. Have a pipe, Leddy,—I shall."

"No," answered Titus ; "I can't smoke—I can't do anything. What a dreadful journey this is !"

"Much better than the prison at Milan, where we should have had a chance of being by this time. There, look at that tobacco—it makes you warm to watch it."

And Jack, having lighted his pipe, appeared in two minutes just as much at his ease as if he had been in Mr. Rawkins' old back parlour.

"Halloo, Leddy—don't go to to sleep," he cried, as he spoke twice without receiving any answer. "If that's it, we must be off. Here—I'll help you with your knapsack. On it goes again."

Very unwillingly Titus left the gallery, and they once more started, walking on until they came to the seventh and eighth houses of refuge. Had there been any tokens of life within, Johnson might perhaps have been induced to stay ; but everything was dark and quiet. So they went on, traversing the valley of Algaby, and then ascending one of the steepest parts of the road, encumbered with blocks of granite and gneiss, which the torrents are gradually detaching from the mountains.

Singular as it may appear, their sense of weariness became less acute as they proceeded. Both had relapsed into silence, and they kept on one dogged, unchanging pace for two hours after quitting the ravine of Algaby. Once Titus proposed that they should take another rest, but this Jack would not hear of ; he knew, if they once sat down, what the difficulty would be in getting up again.

His prediction about the snow turned out correct ; for when, about three in the morning, they reached the village of Simplon, nearly at the summit of the pass, it was lying some inches in depth upon the ground. Poor Titus, whom Jack had plied with brandy as the only means of getting him on, until, under other circumstances, he would have been very intoxicated, could hardly draw one leg after the other ; and, but for Jack's earnest lecture upon the impolicy of knocking up a post-house at that hour so unlikely to be chosen for legitimate travellers, he would have alarmed all the inmates of the hotel. Jack was scarcely less distressed than Ledbury, but his frame was stronger built to bear up against it ; besides, he knew that if he gave way it would be quite up with his friend.

It began to snow very heavily as they left Simplon, and continued to do so for upwards of an hour, until the first dull grey of morning

appeared, slowly breaking over the waste before them. As the increasing light showed the dreary expanse which they had yet to traverse, the remnants of Ledbury's courage entirely forsook him, and sinking down upon a square block of granite at the side of the road, he gasped out—

"It is of no use, Jack ; I can go no further, if I die for it."

In vain Johnson attempted to rouse him : he was fairly "dead beat" with cold and fatigue, and had not an atom of further exertion left.

"But what are we to do, Titus?" asked Jack. "We cannot remain here."

"Oh! yes we can," replied Ledbury, faintly. "I can, at least; and you go on. I shall go to sleep."

And, putting his knapsack on the ground, he threw himself down upon the snow.

"For Heaven's sake, do not shut your eyes!" cried Jack, in alarm. "If you do you will never open them again. Titus, do you hear me? You must be mad to think of going to sleep."

"Oh! leave me alone. Pray let me go to sleep, only for five minutes," said Titus; "and then I can go on again."

"No, no!" cried Johnson, shaking him violently. "I tell you it is death to do so! What must be done?"

He looked round in despair; but nothing but barren rocks met his view. They were nearly seven thousand feet above the level of the sea. But just as he was about making a last strenuous effort to rouse Titus once more, the deep bay of a dog sounded in the quietude, and immediately afterwards a fine mastiff came round the angle of road, and bounded towards them. Jack recognised the animal directly—it was a dog of St. Bernard, and was now at his side, barking at him as if in great wrath, but the next instant licking his hand.

Scarcely another minute elapsed before two figures followed in the path which the dog had made through the snow. One was evidently a monk, but the other had the air of a traveller; and they both hastened towards our friends as Jack beckoned them. But the mutual surprise of recognition may be very well imagined when Mr. Crinks and Jack Johnson met each other's gaze!

"Mes étoiles et jarretières!" said Mr. Crinks; "here's a go! Why, what on earth brought you here?"

"I'll tell you all directly," returned Jack; but first look to Ledbury. Where can we take him?"

"Close at hand," said Mr. Crinks. "The Simplon convent. I've been staying there a week; jolly cocks! This is Father Maurice, whom I was going with to early mass at Simplon. I like to see all I can, you know, for money."

"What a providential chance to find you here!" exclaimed Johnson.

"Isn't it?" replied his vivacious acquaintance. "I came over the Gemmi to Brieg, and here I am. But we can talk about all that presently."

The good monk, who had acknowledged the hurried introduction of Mr. Crinks with mild courtesy, was now endeavouring to get poor Titus upon his legs; whilst the dog, whom he called "Ture," as if

pleased to find the traveller in the hands of his master was rolling about on the ground, revelling in the snow, which he threw about him in all directions.

"Here, give me the knapsacks," said Mr. Crinks, taking up both of them, and slinging one over each shoulder. "What the deuce have you been about to have tired yourself already, at this unholy hour of the morning?"

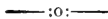
"A long story," answered Jack; "but you shall know it all by-and-by. First of all, where are we to go?"

"Not two minutes' walk; the convent is just round the bend of the road. You would have seen it if you had kept up your courage a little longer.

The monk, who was, as Crinks had observed, on his way to the village of Simplon, now apologised for proceeding; but begged them to return to the convent directly, which is a branch of the far-famed establishment on the great St. Bernard. And then, with his dog leaping and barking before him, he went on his way.

"Now, steady," observed Mr. Crinks, as Ledbury at last rose. "Keep all right upon your pins, and lean on me. We shall be all safe directly."

Nearly hanging upon their shoulders, Mr. Ledbury staggered down the road until they reached the convent. Two or three dogs bounded out to meet them; and, upon being conducted by one of the brethren to the large room, where a fire was blazing on the hearth, Mr. Ledbury fainted outright, whilst Jack threw himself at full length on the floor, and in three minutes fell fast asleep.



CHAPTER LIX.

A FETE AT PARIS—MR. LEDBURY'S LAST APPEARANCE IN PUBLIC.

UNDER the care of the hospitable inmates of the convent and the assurance that all danger was over, now that they had passed the frontier, Mr. Ledbury soon recovered. But they were both so fatigued with their exertions that they agreed to remain one more day in the building, and then once again start off together; for Mr. Crinks was to accompany them all the way to England. And, in spite of the isolated situation of the establishment, there was a great deal to amuse them, more especially on the evening of their arrival, when the whole of the passengers from the Milan and Geneva *malle-post* sought refuge at the convent, in consequence of the mail being immovably fixed in a snow-drift close at hand.

"We hear strange stories of your dogs in England," observed Johnson to the Prior, as they were gazing from the window over the snowy waste before them, where two or three of these fine animals were playing with one another, or barking harmlessly at occasional travellers.

"So I have been informed," replied the father; "I fear they give us credit for a great deal more than we accomplish."

"We have a picture at Islington," said Mr. Ledbury, "of a dog knocking at a door, with a child on his back, and a brandy-bottle round his neck. Did that ever happen, monsieur?"

"Never that I am aware of," replied the Prior, smiling. "Their chief use is to track out the mountain paths by their fine scent, when the snow is so deep that we cannot tell the road from the precipice. They go before us, and would, of course, discover the body of any unhappy traveller before we should; but I believe this is their most important employment.

"Then they do not carry little children on their backs?" said Mr. Ledbury in a tone of disappointment.

"Oh, no," said the Prior. "I doubt not but if they found one in their rambles, they would let us know by their uneasiness on their return that something was amiss, and then guide us to the spot; but this would be all."

"Travelling certainly expands the mind," said Mr. Ledbury, "but destroys many pleasant illusions."

"To be sure it does," remarked Jack. "And if people who write books would only put down the plain truth, instead of copying what they have read before, or allowing their romantic feelings to run away with them, what a good service they would render to persons about to travel!"

The next morning, after a substantial breakfast, they contributed a few francs, consistent with their finances, to the *trone* of the convent chapel—for the monks made no direct charge for their hospitality—and then left the building in company.

They had a lively journey down to Brieg, although the snow was deep enough to make their progress a matter of no trilling exertion, but the sun shone brightly to cheer them, as the snow sparkled in his beams; whilst the clear, sharp mountain air braced up their limbs for double energy, and sent their blood circling through their veins with such vivid impetus that they laughed and shouted for very overflow of animal spirits, until the huge rocks and gorges rang again with their merriment. And when the road, at any steep declivity, assumed a zigzag course, to lessen the descent, Mr. Crinks always proposed that they should glide down the intervening slope to save time, and cut off the turning. And in these undertakings Mr. Ledbury greatly distinguished himself, generally shooting off at a much more rapid rate than the others, and going considerably beyond the goal, never stopping until he finally disappeared altogether in a snowdrift, where he remained until rescued by the ice-poles of his companions.

They arrived at Geneva in two days from quitting the Simplon, where they were compelled to wait a short time, until they procured some passports from Berne, by means of some extraordinary representation to the consul, which Jack Johnson invented. And then these three, taking the *banquette* of the diligence to themselves, crossed the Jura, and passing through Dijon and Troyes, finally, and after an uninteresting and continuous journey of eighty hours, found themselves once more in the courtyard of the *Messageries Générales*, Rue St. Honoré, No. 130. Mr. Crinks, who had formerly inhabited a cock-loft suite of cupboards at the top of a cheap hotel in the Rue Croix des

Petits Champs, suggested that they should go there. But Jack and Ledbury inclined to their old neighbourhood, and, calling a *citadine*, they all drove off with their luggage towards the scene of their first revelries—the Quartier Latin.

There was something very natural in finding themselves together again in Paris; and the old, dirty, narrow streets, after they crossed the Pont Neuf, possessed far greater attractions in their eyes than the flaunting Rue de Rivoli and Chaussée d'Antin.

"There's a *grisette*, Jack!" cried Ledbury, as he caught sight of a little figure, *très gentille*, picking her way over the muddy stones of the Rue de Seine.

"And there's a student," replied Johnson, looking towards a gentleman in a bright scarlet cap, mustachios, and puckered-in grey pantaloons, who was smoking at the corner of the Rue de l'École de Médecine. "And there's the old pipe shop, and M. Constant, with his '*dejeuners à six sous*' just the same as ever: and there's the bill of a *fête* somewhere to-morrow. Hurrah! perhaps we won't be there!"

On arriving at their old lodgings in the Rue St. Jacques, they found that the house was entirely occupied; so that as they only intended to stop a day or two in Paris, Jack proposed that they should go to an hotel. His recommendations were always acquiesced in; and as he made sure that the flight of his former friend was all forgotten, he named the Hôtel Corneille for their temporary abode.

The Hôtel Corneille, at the side of the Odéon Theatre, is the chief establishment of its kind in Paris,—the Clarendon of the Quartier Latin—devoted to the nourishing and shelter of nearly a hundred students of law and medicine who therein "follow their courses." These consist of various studies, in accordance with the taste of the pupil, music being generally predominant; for it is seldom that the Hôtel Corneille does not contain a band of twelve French horns, who play concerted pieces at the open windows overlooking the Odéon colonnades with remarkable effect, and to the great diversion of the neighbours. Demonstrations, by learned professors, upon the various canons and hazards required at billiards, take place daily in the *estaminet* attached to the establishment, to which no entrance fee is required; lectures are delivered at least once a week to the inmates, upon social economy, by the Prefect of Police, before the student takes his degree of Bachelor of Grisettes; and frequent private classes are held for ethical discussions upon the influence of female society upon the habits of mankind in general. Its influence upon the habits of the *étudiants* in the Hôtel Corneille is, generally causing their disposal, in times of pressing necessity, such as the carnival, or close of the session, to the first dealer in second-hand apparel who may chance to visit the district. And this brings us to certain other great advantages which the Hôtel Corneille enjoys over similar houses, but which you must reside there to become acquainted with.

Our travellers soon procured rooms for the two or three final days of their journey; and then, as they had not much further to go, comparatively, before reaching home, Jack and Ledbury laid in fresh suits of clothes from the Palais Royal. Nothing, however, would induce Mr. Crinks to purchase anything French, especially garments,

“for fear,” as he expressed himself, “of being mistaken for some humbug foreigner when he got to England;” and so he paraded about just the same, in his check trousers and ankle-shoes, to the great admiration of the populace.

There was a *fête* the next evening outside one of the barriers; and as it was about the last one of the season, Jack and Ledbury determined to go, prevailing upon their friend, not without some difficulty, to accompany them, Mr. Crinks feeling more inclined to stay behind and knock the shine out of various bearded students at billiards. Two or three of the inmates of the hotel, with whom Jack had already scraped up an acquaintance, proposed to join them; and entrapping a few *grisettes* on their way, who were apparently bound in the same direction, they made up a very lively party. For society discards its suit of buckram in those classic regions; and a previous acquaintance of the slightest description gives you full liberty to accost the pretty owner of any trim pair of feet that may be preceding you, picking their way from the summit of one paving-stone to another along the muddy streets of the Quartier Latin. Provided always, of course, that your addresses are in the strictest school of propriety and politeness; for the *grisettes* of Paris are particular. The *fête* was, as we have stated, outside one of the barriers, and the whole party went merrily down the *faubourg* leading thereto, until they arrived at the scene of its gaieties. It was a mild, bright afternoon—a sort of last appearance of autumn, giving an attractive representation for its farewell benefit; all the company were cheerful and happy; and shows, games, and stalls were set up in all directions, novel in their character, and quite different to those of our fairs in England.

“Voyez, messieurs et dames, voyez,” cried a woman at the edge of the road, “quatre coups pour un sou!”

This informed customers that they might have four shots for a sou, at a stand placed about five feet from the ground, on which were arranged various little images in plaster of Paris; and at the top was a revolving piece of machinery, embellished with birds of the same material. The weapon of demolition was a crossbow with a barrel, and the missile a pellet of clay; and, as nothing was gained from a successful aim beyond the honour of having taken it, the game might be considered as invented principally to gratify the organ of destructiveness. Mr. Crinks immediately entered the lists, and after finding out which way the bias of the barrel inclined, to delude unwary marksmen, began to knock the parrots and giraffes about at such a fearful rate that he would have broken not only all the objects, but even the proprietress, had she not demurred against a continuation of his achievements. Mr. Ledbury was less successful: for in his nervous anxiety to distinguish himself as a sporting character before the assembled spectators, he pulled the trigger before he had taken an aim, and shot a bystander in the face, which feat cost him a two-franc piece, in avoidance of threatened punishment, and stopped all further display on his part.

“Oh he! oh he! messieurs, les oiseaux militaires!” shouted a man in front of a small show, sporting a cocked hat and enormous feathers, “les oiseaux savans et le gr-r-r-r-r-rand escamoteur. Oh he!”

There was an awful representation in front of the show of the magician engaged in cutting off the head of a fashionable gentleman, and presenting it on a plate to an elegant lady, surrounded by company of various nations expressing astonishment. This was sure to attract the *grisettes*, and so the whole party awaited in front of the exhibition, as the man continued—

“Entrez, messieurs et dames. Ce n'est point une vile et honteuse spéculation ! non ! loin de vous cette idée ! Le prix des places est trois sous, mais c'est seulement pour la nourriture de la ménagerie ! Allez, fanfan—la trompette !”

A terrific blast upon an instrument boasting various solutions of continuity followed the command. When it was over the showman shouted forth again, perceiving the parties of our friends—

“Entrez, messieurs les étudiants avec vos dames adorables : entrez, foulez-vous pénétrez tumultueusement dans ce local ! Etouffez-vous, cassez-vous bras et jambes, mais entrez toujours ! Allez, encore la trompette et la gr-r-r-r-osse caisse !”

This eloquence was not to be withstood, and as Mr. Crinks insisted upon paying for the whole party in return for their agreeable society, the whole party took the hint and entered the show, choosing their places upon the rough planks that formed its benches. Their example was followed by others, and the pavilion soon filled when the exhibition of the “oiseaux savans” commenced.

Up to this period the poor objects had been asleep in a cage ; but, on being awakened, they presented a ragged assemblage of little featherless bullfinches, in cocked hats and small red coats, with miniature swords and guns tied round them. They drew carts, marched, deserted, fired cannon, and sat down to dinner ; and, when they had finished, walked very gravely into their cage again, where they directly fell asleep, except one of restless idiosyncrasy, who was forthwith brought out and lectured by his master, who addressed him as *Mon petit jeune homme*.” But it did not appear to have much effect as, upon being released from a gun-carriage upon which he was placed, he made a desperate charge at one of the candles lighted for the purpose of firing the cannon, and directly extinguished it ; for which act of insubordination he was placed in solitary confinement in an old tea-caddy.

Next there was some conjuring, at which the girls screamed with delight, especially when a rabbit was produced from Mr. Ledbury's hat ; and finally the magician declared his readiness to cut off the head of anybody in the company, and replace it in five minutes. But for some time nobody seemed inclined to advance on the platform, and accept the invitation.

“Now's your time, Leddy,” said Jack to his friend. “Go up yourself, and find out the trick. He will have rather a difficulty to take you in.”

This compliment to his perception was quite enough to persuade him ; and Mr. Ledbury stepped over the benches to the side of the conjurer, amidst the applause of the audience, to whom he bowed after a very distinguished fashion.

The conjurer, having pronounced his neck admirably adapted for

the amputation, proceeded to array Mr. Ledbury in a long blouse, which he called *la dernière chemise d'un condamné*, and then sharpened a long knife on the floor, in the manner of clowns who put keen extempore edges upon pantomime razors. A curtain was next drawn down in front of the table upon which the decapitation was to take place—most probably to save the feelings of the spectators; and everything was for a time veiled from their view. But during the interval they heard dreadful moans, and a harsh sawing noise, as if the cartilages of Mr. Ledbury's neck were exceedingly difficult to cut through, which somewhat excited the fears of the *grisettes*, and brought about a state of mind proper for the *dénouement*.

When the curtain was raised, an impressive sight presented itself. In the centre of the table, on a round trencher, was certainly Mr. Ledbury's head, with the hat and spectacles as usual, looking very appalling. His body was apparently lying some little distant from it, being occasionally convulsed, in the manner of Mr. Punch before his medical attendant comes to his relief. After the first thrill of horror, the applause was tremendous, as well as the laughter increased when the magician exclaimed—

“Messieurs et dames—la tête va chanter. Allons—tête, chantez donc!”

And Mr. Ledbury's head thereupon began to sing, in nervous accents, his favourite ballad, “She wore a wreath of roses,” which had been long pronounced at merry Islington to be his *chef d'œuvre*. When he had concluded, Jack Johnson requested the magician to pass the head and plate round amongst the audience, that they might be assured of its reality.

The magician replied that it was too heavy to move, which assertion was considered a joke, and produced a general laugh.

“Fiddle-de-dee!” cried Mr. Crinks, getting up from his seat. “See me lift it up. I can carry it, I'll be bound.”

He advanced to the table, when, to the great surprise of everyone, the plate and head rose quickly up, carrying the green cloth along with it like a pyramid, of which it formed the apex, shooting all the necromantic paraphernalia off upon the floor, and putting the body to great apparent inconvenience, whilst the lips exclaimed in vernacular idiom—

“Come, Crinks—no larks!”

“Qu'est ce qu'il dit?” asked one of the *grisettes*, observing Johnson's glee, of her companion, who understood a little English.

“Qu'il n'a point des alouettes,” replied the student. “Je ne la comprends pas précisément.”

There was immediately a terrible misunderstanding between Mr. Ledbury and the magician, and the curtain was lowered with inconceivable rapidity; after which voices were heard in animated dispute behind it; and finally, Mr. Ledbury emerged once more entire, with some precipitation, from the penetralia, requested Jack to lend him five francs. And when this second compromise had been effected, the audience dispersed, highly delighted with the unrehearsed effects of the exhibition. And then Mr. Ledbury, when his self-possession returned, let Jack Johnson into the secret of the deception, which is always a favourite one at the minor French shows. Two persons are

required to perform it ; and the table closes round the neck of one of them like a pair of stocks, according to diagrams in various conjuring books still extant.

As evening was approaching, they now turned towards the "Bal de Paris," which was gradually being illuminated by handsome lamps suspended all round it. Like most of the temporary ball-rooms at the *fêtes* of Paris, it was an enormous tent, supported by gilt pillars, and surrounded by trophies and tri-coloured flags, with festoons of red, blue, and white calico. The floor was neatly boarded, and in the centre an excellent orchestra of a dozen musicians were performing all the most popular waltzes and quadrilles—an extra charge of five sous above the admission being made for every dance—the gentlemen only paying.

There were enough in our friends' party to form a snug little quadrille by themselves, Mr. Crinks not caring much to dance, but preferring a seat at the end of the tent, where he was allowed to smoke a cigar, and look after the respective properties of his party. But the others danced all the evening : they never heeded the "*Aux places !*" of the master of the ceremonies, nor his urgent appeals for "*Un vis-à-vis !*" to make up their quadrille. And when the cornet pealed out the inspiring notes of "*La Fille du Régiment*," Jack went off with his partner in a style that even the *Chaumière*, and its presiding genius, "*Le Père Lahire*," would have been proud of. It was his last visit to Paris—at least, in all probability until his dancing days were over—and he resolved to make the most of it. And Mr. Ledbury, too, was talking French to his partner—a pretty "*brocheuse*" in a dark *mousseline-de-laine*—with a fluency of perfection that only the influence of a bottle of outside-the-barrier *vin ord naire*, at fifteen sous, could have accomplished ; while the students kept up a perpetual skirmish with the municipal guard respecting the regulations of their method of dancing "*plus ou moins cancan*," which only increased the excitement.

There was a merry supper afterwards, principally composed of grapes and Rheims biscuits, with wine for the gentlemen and *fleur d'orange* for their fair companions. And then they trudged joyfully homewards together, all abreast, arm-in-arm, until they occupied the entire road, singing the old Quartier Latin chorus, "*Eh ! ioup ! ioup ! ioup !*" and buying more *sucre d'orge* and *galette* upon their journey than would have sufficed for a month's ordinary consumption.

At the barrier they took possession of one of the Dames Blanches omnibuses, which they nearly filled with their party, being finally deposited at the principal entrance of the Hôtel Corneille just as the first band of the northern division of holiday-keepers were returning from the *guingettes* of the Barrière du Mont Parnasse.

Nor was the festivity then finished, for a fresh banquet was ordered in Mr. Ledbury's room, at which the mirth was so prolonged that the proprietor, finding all his efforts to disperse the guests perfectly ineffectual, locked up the great gates in despair, and left the whole assembly to that benignant destiny which especially watches over the students of law and medicine in the Quartier Latin of the good city of Paris.

CHAPTER LX.

THE DEATH OF EDWARD MORRIS.

FROM the thoughtless revelry of the *Hôtel Corneille*, and the unalloyed gaiety of its inmates, we will once more change the action of our story to the dreary precincts of "The Brill," at Somers Town.

It was a cold and cheerless evening. Few persons were about in the lonely precincts of Stevens' Rents, and the wind was howling along the canal, and over the broken ground and unfinished foundations along its banks, threatening at each gust to extinguish the few dismal lamps which vainly strove to throw their rays over the gloomy tract of ground intervening between them. It was late, too, an hour after midnight, and the lights in the adjacent tenements had been some time extinguished, except at one of the windows in the detached clump of miserable abodes, of which the beer-shop formed the chief portion. And here a candle was burning close to the casement, as if intended for a beacon to guide some expected visitors across the ground to the building.

In the billiard-room adjoining the bar Matthews, the nominal proprietor of the house, together with Edward Morris, were seated before a fire composed of huge pieces of coal, taken from the barges on the canal. Nobody beside these two was in the room; but occasionally a footstep overhead, or the thick heavy breathing of those in the adjoining apartments, gave token that most probably the remainder of the party were beneath the roof.

"Twenty minutes past one," said Morris, as he cast his eyes towards a watch. "She could have been back two hours ago, giving her even double time for the journey. I can't think what can have detained her."

"Nothing amiss, I hope," returned Matthews, knocking the remaining ashes from his pipe upon the stove, and giving a prolonged yawn. "I shan't sit up much longer, I can tell you. What do you think about it?"

"We had some words before she left," replied Morris. "She has done nothing but quarrel lately. I don't think she would—no—she cares too much for me."

"What, split?" observed Matthews. "What good would that do; she knows we must all go together when we are caught. I don't suppose the game can last much longer. The smashing has had its day, and all other money is running very short."

"If this new pigeon will bleed well that we expect, we can carry on a short time," returned Morris. "Look here—"

And advancing to the billiard-table, he lifted up the cloth, and showed Matthews the wood scraped away at one or two of the pockets with an inclination that would draw any ball into them, once within the range.

"He won't know of this," said Morris; "I shall—and even if he does play better, I shall beat him. I shall practise for an hour or so still, to see how the plan works."

"You had better go to bed," observed Matthews, gruffly; "you look like a corpse now."

"No, I shall not go until Letty returns. I am somewhat annoyed at her absence. I should not sleep if I did."

"Well, I, don't see the use of my sitting up, just for the sake of doing so," continued the other. "You can give me a shake when she comes back, and let me know all about it. Good-bye for the present."

As he spoke he rose from the fireplace, and turned into the bar, his accustomed sleeping apartment. Here he threw himself on the remnant of a sofa covered with canvas and old sacking, and in a few minutes his heavy snoring proclaimed him to be asleep. Morris now went to the door, and, opening it, walked out a few paces from the house, peering through the darkness, as if to discover whether there were any tokens of the arrival of his expected messenger; but all was desolate and obscure, and he returned into the room, closing the door after him, and shivering with the cold as he approached the fire. But the momentary chill brought on a violent fit of coughing, so prolonged and exhausting in its attack upon his debilitated frame that he threw himself upon the ground before the fireplace, and remained so for at least a quarter of an hour after the paroxysm had concluded.

At length he rose, and, taking one of the cues that were lying scattered about the room, commenced trying his skill with the billiard-balls, placing them in every variety of position that could prove the effect of the alterations he had made in the bed of the table, and rehearsing those mechanical tricks of the game in which the questionable *chevaliers d'industrie* who frequent the public rooms of the metropolis are such fine proficient. The time wore on, and still Letty did not return; yet Morris kept playing with an unwearied perseverance, calculating every chance and hazard of the table with the keenest care. Frequently, when Matthews woke from his fitful sleep in the course of the night, he heard the click of the balls knocking against one another in the adjoining apartment. But at last all was quiet; and then the worthy host, imagining that Morris was worn out with his exertions, or that Letty, had returned, and all was securely shut up for the night, troubled himself no further, but turned round upon his rough couch and once more sank into a deep slumber.

The first grey gleam of daybreak was stealing through the apertures of the shutters that closed the bar-windows, when the landlord was aroused by a loud knocking at the door, coupled with the voices and footsteps of several persons outside. There was a determination in the summons very different to the stealthy signal of the usual frequenters of the house when they wished to gain admission: and he was for a moment undecided how to act, when a renewed clamour, coupled with the intimation that the door would be broken in by authority unless it was directly opened, convinced him that the patience of the visitors was not to be trifled with. Groping his way to the door in the dim obscurity, he found that it was merely closed by the latch, none of the usual bars or chains being put across it, which proved that the girl had not returned. As he opened it, shading the cold morning light with his hand from his half-closed eyes, he saw

that a large party of the police were standing round it, accompanied at a timid distance by a few idlers of "The Brill," who had followed them from mere curiosity.

"You have some one named Morris living here?" said the constable to Mathews, before he had well recovered himself from the surprise caused by his unexpected visitors.

"No, no," he replied, hastily assuming an apparent unconcern; "there is nobody of that name here, as I know of."

"Well, we will satisfy ourselves," returned the other, as he entered the passage, "Perhaps he is here, and you don't know it, so that we had better look."

"I'm sure I can't tell," observed Matthews, carelessly. "I'm only a lodger. There may or may not be. Good morning, gents."

"I must trouble you to keep along with us," said the policeman, "if it is only to show us the way."

And, at a sign, two of the party placed themselves on either side of the landlord, who now began to perceive that things were taking a somewhat serious turn as regarded himself.

They advanced along the short passage before the bar, one of the force remaining at the door to keep back the followers who now clustered round it, and entered the billiard-room. It was here nearly dark, for the lamp on the chimney-piece was on the point of going out, its glimmering and expiring flame being scarcely sufficient to cast a light a few inches from where it was placed.

"We must have some more light," said the sergeant. Open the shutters, there one of you."

A man advanced to the window and pulled down the strong square board that was placed against it. The light streamed through the casement, and an involuntary exclamation of surprise and horror burst from the party, as it fell upon the billiard-table deluged with blood, and the body of Edward Morris, cold and dead, hanging over the cushions, the feet scarcely touching the ground, and reclining on its face in the midst of the hideous pool, whilst one of the hands still grasped the billiard-cue.

"He has made away with himself!" exclaimed one or two voices.

"He has been murdered!" cried others, at the same time.

The inspector approached the body, and with an apathy only acquired by constant intimacy with similar scenes, raised the head by its hair from the table, and endeavoured to ascertain the cause of death. But there was none visible, although the crimson stream had apparently welled entirely away from its tenement, for the body was perfectly blanched from the loss, but still retaining its flexibility. He had ruptured a vessel in the lungs whilst leaning over the cushion, and thus died upon the table.

"This may prove an awkward business for you," said the constable to the proprietor. "You must go back with us, as well as everybody in the house. How many have you got here?"

"I don't know," replied Matthews, in a surly tone. "I have told you that I know nothing about it. They only sleep here: if you want them you had better look for them yourself."

"I intend to," returned the other.

And he proceeded to despatch one of his fellows to the nearest station for additional help, whilst a couple of those remaining were ordered to post themselves outside the house.

But whilst the officers were giving these directions a fresh tumult was heard at the door. Above the murmur of several voices in contention, a female's was distinctly audible in accents of earnest supplication and distress; and before the cause could be ascertained, a young girl burst into the room. She was but half dressed, and partly enveloped in a coarse whittle shawl, thrown carelessly over her head and shoulders; but her face was so pale and haggard that in the absence of speech and motion she might have formed a fitting consort for the dreary corpse on the table before them. She cast one wild and hurried glance, with the restless vision of a maniac, from one to the other of the assembled party, and then her eye finally rested on the body of Edward Morris. For an instant she appeared to mistrust the reality of the fearful object. She advanced towards it, and then, shrinking away with terror, fell shuddering back, as a subdued cry of agony burst from her parted lips—an intense but stifled exclamation of fearful despair, as if a breaking heart was choking the utterance of the deepest and most poignant anguish. One of the bystanders caught her in his arms as she was falling to the ground, and placing her upon one of the rough settles in front of the fireplace, attempted to offer a few words of common-place conversation. But she heeded them not: to all appearance she was as unconscious of aught about her as her late associate.

It was, indeed, the unfortunate companion of Edward Morris, whose attempted suicide on the preceding night we have already spoken of. She had been carried to bed by the people of the house to which she had been first taken, and her clothes placed in her room at her own request, before she fell into a feverish sleep—the result of exhaustion from the trying ordeal she had undergone. But the slumber was of short duration; and upon awaking, as soon as her ideas were sufficiently collected, she sought for the letter, which she remembered was in her pocket, and found that it was gone. From the unguarded answers of the servants of the tavern, who came up occasionally to look after their patient, she learned that the police appeared on the point of starting upon some expedition to which they had but just obtained a clue: and this intelligence, heedlessly given, determined her how to act. In the absence of the woman, she attired herself as hastily as her enfeebled powers of exertion would permit, and slipping quietly downstairs, left the house at daybreak. The morning air came cold and death-like to her shattered frame; and the few individuals who were moving at that early hour regarded her with some slight feelings of suspicion, as her haggard apparition crossed their path: but she heeded them not, her only object being to arrive at the Brill, and warn Morris of his danger. When she got into the wretched neighbourhood in the precincts of Stevens' Rents, she was regarded with less mistrust, for misery was the prevailing character of the locality and its inmates; a ruddy face and buoyant step would have excited more surprise than the pale features and cowering progress of the unhappy girl. As she approached the house

which Morris inhabited she saw a few persons round the door; and on arriving at the threshold was, at first refused admittance by the constable, until the man relented, partly shaken in his determination by the taunts of the bystanders, who are ever ready to take part against the authorities. The rest the reader is acquainted with.

It was not long before the reinforcements of the police arrived, and the whole of the gang found in the house were taken into custody. They made no attempt at resistance. The persons of the majority were so well known to the police that their escape would have been speedily followed by a re-capture in another direction. And then the house was closed, two of the force remaining to guard it until the inquest had terminated, and the body might be removed.

The unhappy girl was taken to the St. Pancras Workhouse, still insensible. Fever rapidly supervened upon the previous prostration and sudden shock her frame had experienced. The reaction increased beyond the power of medical assistance to control it; and in three days she was no less free from further peril and anguish than her late hapless associate. Then came a pauper funeral; the plain elm coffin, and the transient monument of carelessly heaped-up mould, which was soon shuffled down level to the ground, until there remained no trace to mark the grave of the single atom in the vast body of London misery that was mouldering below.

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CHAPTER LXI.

MR. LEDBURY AND JACK JOHNSON ONCE MORE RETURN HOME.

A VERY short time elapsed after the *fête* before Jack and Ledbury packed up their treasures to return home, having agreed to go back by Rouen and Havre, to the great delight of Titus. For he anticipated much pleasure in getting romantic about Joan of Arc and Robert the Devil; and also calculated that a knowledge of the country would enable him to throw additional force, when he got once more to Irlington, into the air, "*Quand je quittais la Normandie,*" which might serve to represent the night when he left Havre, and which he had an idea would be very effective on the flute. Mr. Crinks also was of the party; for he likewise began to think it was time to return, being the active head of some City establishment located in Mincing Lane, which would have excited much ingenious speculation in deep thinkers as to how money could be made in such a dingy, unpresuming set of chambers as he occupied. But in the City dirt and gold are always intimately connected, as if the precious metal still retained a hankering affection for the earth it sprang from. And alchemy is therein studied with wondrous success, transmuting all things into wealth, no longer in underground laboratories and secret chambers, but in the peopled thoroughfares, and on the broad and sparkling rivers.

They steamed with tolerable speed down the Seine, which at some parts may be termed a miniature Rhine, from the beauty of its scenery; and, only stopping at Havre a few hours, crossed the same evening to Southampton. And then the railway deposited them at Vauxhall in perfect safety, when the trio separated, not without some feelings of regret, Mr. Crinks availing himself of the services of the *Lightning* to convey him to London Bridge, after being made the subject of a serious trial of muscular power between the respective partisans of the iron and wooden companies. Jack Johnson avowed his intention of invading the establishment of Mr. Prodgers, and procuring a bed for a night or two in his old quarters, until he could look about him; and Mr. Ledbury proceeded at once to his family mansion at Islington.

The delight of Mr. Prodgers at seeing his old friend was unbounded; and Jack was no less pleased at inspecting the different arrangements of his late fellow-apprentice, which he did with great interest from one end of the surgery to the other, as soon as an extempore meal was finished and the first burst of conversation had subsided, and then he took his place behind the day-book as naturally as if he had never been away, and as if Mr. Rawkins was still his guide and preceptor.

"And how are you getting on, Percy?" asked Jack.

"Well, I ought not to grumble," returned Prodgers. "Those pills have made a great hit," he added, pointing to the pyramid of Vitality. "I have added a treatise on indigestion, and a list of cures, to their other attractions."

"Ah! I see," observed Jack, as he read reports of several cases coming from Cardiff, Bolton, York, Norwich, and Exeter. "What a very extensive practice you must have, eh, Percy?"

"Remarkably so," returned the other, drawing Jack's attention to some chimerical object, by pointing with his thumb over his left glenoid articulation of the humerus. "But it is nothing to my imagination. Do you know, I invented all those cures myself, except that one of the cobbler, who had been given up by all the hospitals."

"And how did you cure him?"

"I gave him a pair of strong walking-shoes——"

"What!—to take?"

"No, to make. I told him what I wanted; and he promised to have every illness I wished in return for my patronage. New-footing a pair of boots induced a hitherto incurable asthma; paying him ready-money for them made him paralytic from his birth; a pair of hob-nailed high-lows for my cad-boy drew him into a confession that he had been led by a friend to try 'Prodgers' Pill of Vitality'; and the final order of the strong walking-shoes eliciting an avowal that I was at liberty to make what use I pleased of the communication. Don't you see?"

"Perfectly," replied Johnson, laughing; "and who are your agents in Cardiff, and the other places, who take such an interest in your discovery?"

"Ah, now you puzzle me," returned Prodgers. "I looked out for

the names in an old London directory, and then appointed them to different country agencies myself. I established one in Philadelphia last night, who wrote back this morning, begging that I would have the goodness to forward him two hundred boxes, as his first consignment was exhausted."

"You'll do, Percy," said Johnson, looking with complacency at his friend, whom he had never before given credit to for such sound medical knowledge. "Only take care they do not produce any ill effects."

"They are perfectly harmless," answered Prodgers; "equal parts of bread and soap, rolled in liquorice-powder. They are very useful to emigrants, because, upon emergency, they would do to shave with; and may be given to infants with impunity."

"That is a great point," observed Jack.

"It is everything. I always leave everything to Nature. You may depend upon it, she knows a great deal more about our constitutions than we do."

The establishment of Mr. Prodgers was closed that afternoon at an early hour, and the remainder of the evening was spent in conversation upon past occurrences, and the discussion of future prospects on either side. Fortunately, no case required the attendance of the young practitioner, and so he sat with his guest over the fire of the old back parlour, comparing positions and laying out plans, until the last pipe of *tabac de régie* was exhausted, when they both retired to rest.

Early the next morning Jack collected his testimonials, and started off for an interview with Mr. Howard's solicitor—having determined that he would not call at Ledbury's house until he had settled everything; and feeling assured that Titus would lose no opportunity of smoothing the way for his reception. His visit was most satisfactory; and everything was arranged in a most pleasant manner to all parties, for Mr. Howard had already written to London, advising his lawyer of his intentions with regard to Johnson, and begging him to lose no time, upon that gentleman's return, in introducing him to the duties of his new office. And those were not very heavy: a daily attendance of from three to five hours in the City, for transcribing and arranging certain documents—English and foreign—which at present had somewhat the appearance, to Jack, of hieroglyphics made difficult; but which he was assured a little attention would enable him perfectly to understand and enter into.

This point being pleasantly arranged, Jack next bent his steps, with a throbbing heart and anxious expectancy, towards the City house of Mr. Ledbury senior. The old gentleman was engaged in his private room when Jack arrived; so he sat down to wait until he should be at leisure, one of the clerks—a presentable one, who had been present at the party at the beginning of the year—recollecting him, and politely handing him the morning paper. But Jack found it was of no use trying to fix his attention to it. He read the leader through and through four or five times, without having the slightest idea at the conclusion what it had been about—his eyes running over the state of Spain, and his mind only thinking of Emma Ledbury,

until all the paragraphs, letters, and advertisements appeared to join in one wild dance of triumph at his confusion, and shot about to all corners of the page at once, like motes in a sunbeam.

At last the visitor with whom Mr. Ledbury had been occupied took his leave ; and Jack was ushered into the room, in the same state of mind as that of a prisoner when he is called up to receive judgment, or a medical student as he follows the awful beadle of the Apothecaries' Company into the hall of inquisition, to undergo his examination. But he was somewhat reassured by the very polite and almost cordial manner in which the old gentleman received him and requested him to be seated.

"I am glad to see you back in England, Mr. Johnson," said Mr. Ledbury ; "and am also exceedingly obliged to you for the attention which you showed to my commission. We must thank you, too, for looking after Titus ; you appear to have brought him out of several scrapes which his want of knowledge of the world let him into."

"I believe all the gratitude ought to be on my part, sir," replied Jack. "We had a delightful journey, and, to me, a highly fortunate one. I suppose Titus has mentioned something to you about it."

"I think he said something last night about an agency with which you had been entrusted by Mr. Howard. I was very happy to hear it," returned the old gentleman.

Jack thought Mr. Ledbury alluded to this circumstance very unconcernedly, considering what an important affair it was, and did not very well know how to proceed ; whilst Mr. Ledbury, who had some very slight suspicion as to the motive of Jack's visit, waited for him to speak first concerning it. So that for a short time they were both silent ; and it was not until Mr. Ledbury had poked the fire, and folded and arranged several perfectly unimportant letters upon the desk before him with great care, that Jack could summon up courage to speak. At last he made a bold plunge into the affair, and began—

"I have come, sir, for the purpose of having a short interview with you respecting my attachment to your daughter. You will recollect, perhaps, that upon one occasion before this we discussed this subject?"

"I remember it perfectly," answered the old gentleman, "and I believe I then made you acquainted with my sentiments on that point, which you can possibly call to mind."

"I ought to be able to do so, sir," said Jack. "I have repeated them to myself, and commented upon them often enough, lately."

"But you have not since discovered anything unreasonable in what I then told you?" observed Mr. Ledbury.

"Neither since, nor at the time, sir. I think you then made the observation that you could not countenance my attentions to Miss Ledbury unless I was possessed of an income sufficient to support her in the same style of comfort she had been brought up to."

"I have no doubt these were my words. I will give you credit for having recollected them better than I could," returned Mr. Ledbury, half smiling.

"Well, sir," continued Jack, drawing additional courage from the

expression of placidity that stole over the old gentleman's face, "I am happy to say that my prospects now enable me to make an offer for your daughter's hand. You were pleased to tell me some time ago that you had confidence in my honour. I hope that confidence has not been shaken?"

"Nothing on your part has led me ever to mistrust you, Mr. Johnson," answered the old gentleman; "but you must excuse me if I ask you what regular income your expectations lead you to expect?"

"I am to receive two hundred a year," returned Jack; "at least, that was the sum Mr. Howard offered to me to become his agent."

"And Mr. Howard's word is his bond: you will learn that, if you have not found it so already. But you will pardon me, Mr. Johnson: do you think that a sufficient income to marry upon?"

"Not by itself, sir, certainly," said Johnson. "But you will perhaps not dislike me the more for being frank with you. I will confess I have not altogether been without hopes that, on your own part, you might feel inclined to advance some certain moderate sum, to be settled on your daughter, and entirely at her disposal. You must not think that I am actuated by any mercenary feelings on this point—it is for her sake alone that I should wish this."

"You will never find me unreasonable or illiberal in my transactions," observed the old gentleman; "but this is an affair that requires some little consideration. Besides, there is another inclination to be consulted—my daughter's."

"In the meantime, sir," said Jack, "may I be permitted to call at your house?"

"Well—I see no very great objection to your so doing," replied Mr. Ledbury; "and you may take this, if you please, as a proof of my trust in your good feeling. Will you dine with us on Thursday?"

There can be little doubt but that the invitation was speedily and most willingly accepted. Then, as other business required Mr. Ledbury's attention, Jack took his leave, thanking him earnestly—if ever there was sincerity in the world—for the hopes he had thrown out, that all might finally be pleasantly arranged, however faintly shadowed forth those expectations were. And he lost no time in flying back to the house of Mr. Prodgers, where Titus was awaiting his return, in accordance with a previous arrangement, to whom he reported nearly every syllable of the interview.

"It's all right, Jack," said his friend; "I know the governor's ways better than you do. He would not have asked you to our house if he had not intended everything to turn out comfortably. You will be my brother-in-law, after all."

"If you are about to marry," observed Mr. Prodgers, with much importance, "allow me—"

And hereupon he presented Jack with his professional card in all due gravity, continuing—

"No connection with Mr. Koops. Individuals ushered into and out of the world in half the usual space of time, at the lowest possible scale of prices. Ask for the Pill of Vitality—there is a private box at your disposal."

CHAPTER LXII.

IN WHICH THE WISHES OF MOST PARTIES ARE ACCOMPLISHED.

It was not until some days after his arrival in England, and then by mere chance, that Jack became acquainted with the particulars of his cousin's death. When the catastrophe occurred, a policeman friendly to the Prodgers interests had started off directly to give him notice of the event, even taking a cab on his own responsibility; and by this alacrity Mr. Prodgers arrived at "The Brill" before any other medical man, which procured his attendance at the inquest, and the accompanying guinea for his services. This important fee he had entered in large letters, and with great form, in his day-book; and thus Jack learnt what had happened, whilst looking over the different entries that marked the progress of his friend's professional career.

As he had never mentioned the connection between Edward Morris and himself to anyone, not even to Titus, he determined that it should still remain a secret; and accordingly he checked the exclamation of surprise which Mr. Prodgers' narrative of the occurrence brought to his lips. At first, however, he was much shocked at the wretched fate of his relative; although it would be wrong to deny that, when this had passed away, he did feel a heavy weight taken from his mind by Edward's death; for the purely innocent manner in which he had become, in a measure, involved in his cousin's delinquencies had ever since thrown a shadow across his path, even in his gayest moments.

His first care was to return the money committed to his care to the quarter from whence it had been purloined. He took it from his box, enveloped in the same old rag in which he had received it a twelvemonth back—for his word had been kept with respect to its being sacred whilst in his possession—and left it himself at the banking-house wherein Morris had been a clerk, accompanied by an anonymous note, briefly explaining the circumstances, and requesting an acknowledgment of its receipt in one of the daily journals. The advertisement appeared two days afterwards, and before long Jack felt happier than he had been for some time; insomuch, that Mr. Prodgers, who had caught a new patient, and was equally joyful, having proposed a celebration of the event, only anticipated Jack's intention. A note was sent off to Titus, who was delighted to join the party; and after this the trio waylaid Mr. Tweak upon the Queen's highway, as he came from evening lecture, and carried him off in triumph to the heights of Clerkenwell. And then they passed a very merry evening, aided by a hot supper, and subsequent indulgence in spirituous liquors and tobacco, until they got so lively that the old days of Rawkins and Hoppy appeared to be revived with all their original splendour and effect. And Mrs. Pim, next door, heard unwonted harmony in the middle of the night; the chink of wine-cups, and the lively measure of hornpipes danced upon the table amongst the pipes and tumblers, in emulation of cunning terpsichorean

professors, amidst their new-laid eggs, until the tumblers vindicated their pretensions to their names by falling off upon the floor. All this, as may be expected, considerably disturbed Mrs. Pim's rest, although this was possibly less inconvenient to herself than it would have been to other old ladies, inasmuch as, from her own account, she has never slept a wink for forty years. But when Mr. Koops called to see her the next morning, she gave him a painful account of her sufferings during the night, which she described as if Chinese mandarins had been performing solos on the drums of her ears, and all her brains had turned into barrel-organs out of tune. Mr. Prodgers and his party, however, thought little about Mrs. Pim in their moments of conviviality, although they went so far as to serenade her in the open air when the hour arrived for them to part.

As soon as they were gone Jack retired to bed, in spite of all his host's entreaties that he would stay up a little longer, leaving Mr. Prodgers to be convivial by himself, who re-filled his glass, smoked another cigar, and then began to read all his printed lists of cures by the Pills of Vitality three or four times over, placing a box of those invaluable preparations upon an inverted tumbler before him, which from time to time he regarded with affectionate admiration. And from this circumstance, those who had minutely studied his idiosyncrasy might have offered a safe opinion upon the present state of his cerebral organs; for whenever Mr. Prodgers had imbibed more of the products of fermentation than was absolutely essential to allay thirst in a normal condition of his organisation, he was wont to read his list of cures with untiring attention; or if he chanced to be from home, upon returning to his abode he would contemplate his name on the door, in rapt ecstasy, sometimes for a quarter of an hour, before entering. And then it was that his unfettered aspirations soared aloft, and he felt the exalted place which that name was destined some day to hold, although when, where, or by what means, were points which the glittering web of his futurity had not plainly revealed.

On the following Thursday, according to the invitation of old Mr. Ledbury, Jack dined at his house. Nothing could be kinder than his reception by all the family; and there seemed to be a tacit understanding amongst them that he was to sit by Emma at dinner. And when, after the ladies had quitted the table, he was left with Titus and his father, the old gentleman completed Jack's happiness by telling him "he saw nothing against his being allowed to pay his addresses to Emma, upon mature consideration;" and also that he, Mr. Ledbury, had made such pecuniary concessions in her favour as he was assured Mr. Johnson would not be displeased with.

"And now, Mr. Johnson," said the old gentleman, "I suppose you and Emma understand each other's sentiments pretty well; let me suggest your union with all reasonable expedition."

"I desire nothing better sir," was the reply.

"I am glad of it," continued Mr. Ledbury. "I do not like to see young people rushing head over heels into precipitate marriages; but, when everything appears tolerably straightforward, I am a great enemy to long engagements. Titus, get another bottle of claret."

Titus took the key from his father and left the room.

"During the time you have been my son's companion," said Mr. Ledbury, as the door closed, "I believe he has much to thank you for. He has gained a knowledge of men and manners which may be of some service to him in my establishment. I must confess, before he became acquainted with you, I was somewhat puzzled, from his simplicity, what to put him to."

"I can see myself an alteration in him, sir," replied Jack. "But, through it all, his sense of honour and good feeling have always remained the same."

"You are right; and Emma possesses all his best qualities, with a more extended judgment. She is a good girl, Mr. Johnson. My giving her to you is the best evidence of my confidence in your own integrity. Come—we will drink her health."

The tears stood in Jack's eyes as he filled his glass, and swallowed its contents very convulsively to hide his emotion. Titus returned directly afterwards with the claret, and some wonderful story pertaining to the economy of the cellar, which turned the conversation, and after a little while they all retired to the drawing-room.

It was the happiest evening that Jack ever passed in all his life. The old gentleman read the *Sun* with his usual attention; and Mrs. Ledbury was still deeply engaged in the fabrication of the knit worsted shawl, which had employed her, apparently, ever since the dark ages of fancy-work, when the light of Berlin wool was beginning to dawn upon the hitherto sober dominion of crewel, and, in point of imperceptible progress, was bidding fair to rival the suspension-bridge at Hungerford. Titus was more than usual fraternally affectionate, and was assisting his little brother Walter, before Foster came to put him to bed, in giving a grand banquet to nobody, from various extraordinary wooden viands, imported to Islington from the distant regions of the Lowther Arcade. And so Emma and Jack were left to entertain each other, and they did not appear to complain of being dull. Emma played the piano nearly all the evening, and Jack turned over the leaves for her, as he sat close by her side, talking "through the music," as they say in stage directions, when the heroines have to declaim, in moments of deep interest, to an orchestral accompaniment. Possibly a thorough musician would have discovered a want of unity, and an occasional too rapid transition from one style to another, in Emma's performance; but so much important conversation was passing between them all the while that it was only remarkable how the young lady could play anything at all. And indeed, at last, Titus, with all his forbearance, solicited a new tune, reminding her that she had played the *Valse de Fascination* fifteen or sixteen times over from beginning to end, and recommending her to try something from *Norma* by way of variety. But their series of concerted pieces only came to a conclusion upon the appearance of the supper-tray; and when Jack finally took his leave, Emma chose to light him to the door herself—a proceeding which occupied so much time that it was evident some evil genius had hidden Jack's chesterfield and hat in one place, and his stick and gloves in another, during his visit, or nothing would have detained his fair companion so long from the sitting-room.

At length, however, Emma returned, rubbing her taper fingers together, exclaiming it was very cold, and looking amazingly as if she thought so. And Jack was once more on his way home; but as he left the door, he could not help looking back upon his wretchedness the last time he quitted the house—how dreary everything appeared to him—how the very wind appeared to howl in insulting triumph at his misery, as it swept through the unfinished buildings of the street. And now, although the shells of the houses were just the same, and the wind was blowing, if anything, with double violence, yet its very anger suggested ideas of cheerfulness and comfort, as the thought of long happy evenings, and snug merry firesides, which would lose half their charms without the noise of the wind—locked out for the night, like any other boisterous reveller—to let folks know, by contrast, how contented they ought to feel. And in this pleasant mood he trudged home to Prolgers', and went to bed, finally dreaming that he could furnish a four-roomed house comfortably, a six-roomed ditto elegantly, and a ten-roomed ditto luxuriously, at ten shillings per room, such being about the rate of prices his friend had adhered to when he entered upon the establishment of Pattle, surgeon and accoucheur, a fortnight with, and successor to, Mr. Rawkins.

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CHAPTER LXIII.

THE LAST INDISCRETION OF JACK JOHNSON.

To make up for the spirit of inaction which had pervaded the world of Islington for some time past, the Grimleys and Mrs. Hoddle soon had enough to talk about and engage their attention. For Miss Grimley had first heard from her dressmaker that a *trousseau* was in active preparation for Miss Ledbury, and forthwith carried the intelligence to Mrs. Hoddle at tea-time that same evening; expressing her great sorrow that poor Emma was going to marry that Mr. Johnson, after all, and hoping sincerely that everything would turn out for the best. By the medium of Mrs. Hoddle's general news-agency the important fact was soon promulgated in every corner of Islington, and the day was fixed, the arrangements determined upon, and the pecuniary affairs on either side definitively laid down by the settlers of the northern metropolitan colonies, long before the parties most interested had themselves any fixed idea upon the subject. Jack passed all his spare time at the Ledburys', possibly more than he ought strictly to have done, and even appeared on two consecutive Sundays in their pew at St. Mary's Church, which considerably distracted the attention of the congregation from matters of deeper import, which fully proved the interest excited by the circumstance; for Islington may be considered, upon the whole, of the elect.

Three or four weeks passed from this period, during which time

Jack Johnson was unceasingly employed in making all sorts of elaborate preparations for this change in his condition ; and at last the important day arrived. At an early hour of the morning, as soon as breakfast was concluded, Mrs. Hoddle took up her position at the front window in a full-dress cap, that she might not lose any of the visible proceedings ; and at the same time, close observers might have discovered various heads of the Grimley family approximating as closely to the gauze blinds as prudence would permit, casting frequent glances towards the Ledburys' front-door, and being at last gratified by the arrival of two carriages, the closest approximation to private vehicles which the enterprise of Titus could procure. These drew up at the gate, and soon attracted a crowd of children, to beguile the time by swinging upon the chains, practising gymnastics on the rails, chasing one another round and under the carriages, or occasionally greeting Titus with a prolonged huzza, as his head nervously appeared at any of the windows.

The next arrival was a fly, which had come the whole way from the South-Western Railway, containing Fanny Wilmer, who was to be one of the bridesmaids, and her brother, who had left Clumpley that very day to be present at the solemnisation, and who, being taken by the assembled children for the bride and bridegroom, were cheered vociferously until they entered the house. And Ledbury's page, who had all the morning resembled a human puppet in buttons, so active were his movements, having carried in all sorts of strange country-looking parcels, which spoke of fowls and cream, and came with the Wilmers, darted off at a frantic tangent up the street. He returned in a few minutes, leading back a fellow-page with a patronising air, a small boy of spare habit, who, upon closer inspection by those who had known him formerly, turned out to be the original Bob that had shared the vicissitudes of the pigeon and guinea-pigs in the medico-zoological establishment of Mr. Rawkins. For Jack had discovered a clue to Bob's *locale* subsequently to Mr. Pattle's break-up ; and taking him from the workhouse, in which he had passed some months, caused him to be clad in a modern page's most approved costume, and appointed him his especial retainer. In the interim he had boarded with a staid woman of industrious habits, who assisted families in distress when cooks left suddenly, and new ones came not, at the rate of a shilling a day and her meals ; and on this eventful morning had been so long occupied in getting into his clothes that it was found necessary to send for him, as his assistance was needed in the general turmoil.

Nor was there less bustle at Mr. Prodgers', where Jack was still staying, although fewer characters were engaged in it. Our friend had lain awake all night long, sinking into a deep slumber towards morning, from which he was aroused by Mr. Prodgers at half-past seven, who knocked violently at his door, reminding him that he was to be turned off at ten, and that he had come to pinion him : such expressions being figurative of the approaching ceremonial, and proffered assistance in his toilet. When Jack appeared there was no denying that he was looking remarkably well, but at the same time very quiet and thoughtful, which induced Mr. Prodgers to

enliven him with the banter usual and perfectly allowable upon similar occasions, telling him to recollect that he had brought it all upon himself, although it was soon over, and regretting he could hold out few hopes of a reprieve. And, lastly, when the carriage came to the door, he told him the hour had arrived, and, taking his seat with his friend, carried the analogy still further by a novel play upon the word "altar."

The Grimleys and Mrs. Huddle saw the *cortège* depart from Ledbury's in the accustomed order of such things; Miss Grimley observing that she did not think Emma Ledbury looked very happy for a bride, and Mr. Horace Grimley finding fault with a twist in Mr. Ledbury's new fawn-coloured trousers. And then Miss Grimley, much annoyed to think that Emma—such a sweet girl as she was—should be throwing herself away, with such strange prospects in anticipation, vented her humour on the servants by giving them various commissions, which required their attendance in the back-rooms of the house, and preventing them from balancing themselves from all the windows, which they had hitherto been doing, in company with all the other domestics of the street.

At last the wedding party returned, and beyond the glimpse which the Grimleys caught of the happy couple as they hurriedly passed from the carriage to the house, they saw no more. But great was the excitement within the walls of the Ledbury mansion. The confectioner who had provided the supper for the renowned evening party furnished the breakfast upon the present occasion; and never had there been a similar collation in Islington. Hipkins also came to wait, in white Berlin gloves, bringing his umbrella, although the morning was bright and fine; and the two pages together made an important leaf in the chronicles of the day.

And the breakfast—what a scene of prawns and tears, cold partridges and cambrie handkerchiefs, was the breakfast! There was not a very large party—some twenty or thirty guests; but they were all intimate friends of the Ledburys, for they had invited nobody from mere compliment. Mr. Prodgers was there, of course, as well as Mr. Crinks, their merry *compagnon de voyage*, who took this opportunity of showing that he had other clothes besides the check trousers and lace-up shoes in which he had travelled. And these two, introduced to one another by Titus, soon became acquainted, and were of invaluable service in counteracting the crying part of the morning's programme of performances, wondering that the bride and bridegroom should look so miserable, when what they had done was entirely voluntary on their parts. Still Emma was pale and tearful, and those who had seen Jack in former times dancing the *caucan* "*chez Touzelier*," or conducting the election of Mr. Rawkins, would scarcely have recognised in him the same person. But, if they were both so serious, they were no less happy, and did not care to intrude their grave thoughts upon the party assembled; for they were too much occupied with each other until their healths, proposed by Mr. Wilmer, called a few words of warm acknowledgment from Jack, and a few more tears from his weeping, blushing, smiling Emma, which also made Titus wipe his spectacles for very emotion. Mr. Crinks, as

we have stated, did not feel at all inclined to cry, nor did Mr. Prodgers; for, being stationed one on each side of Miss Wilmer, they kept that young lady in such a continual state of mirth with their remarks and hopes, at some of which she hardly knew whether to be most alarmed or amused, that her bright laughing eyes allowed no room in them for sentiment. And when nobody was looking, Mr. Crinks gave Master Walter Ledbury repeated glasses of champagne, until at last he tumbled back into the plate-basket, with very faint hopes as to the probability of his ever being extricated; whilst Mr. Prodgers, who kept Bob behind his chair the whole time, as an old friend, finished by rendering his services, for that day at least, entirely unavailable by means of the same potent beverage. And when the kissing came, Mr. Prodgers pronounced it the best portion of the entertainment, and Miss Wilmer never saw anybody so rude, and Mr. Ledbury—the junior, our own Titus—laughed, and took wine with everybody, sometimes twice over, and said good things, and proposed Mr. Crink's health, and finally drank "The Bridesmaids," with their speedy promotion, with three times three and musical honours, which he even led himself, before being publicly requested to return thanks on behalf of the young ladies.

At two o'clock a carriage and four drew up in front of the house, and once more attracted the Grimleys and Mrs. Hoddle to the windows. And then, in a few minutes afterwards, amidst the fresh cheers of the little boys, and the energetic pantomime of Titus, Jack and Emma entered the carriage, which immediately dashed off with railway speed, and was soon out of the sight of their assembled friends; but whose most sincere wishes for their happiness and prosperity they carried with them.

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CHAPTER LXIV.

WHICH WINDS UP EVERYBODY'S AFFAIRS.

THERE is one great advantage, in the creation of fictitious characters which the dramatist enjoys over the novelist: he is not obliged to pursue any of their fortunes beyond the marriage in anticipation, with which the majority of plays terminate, but drops his curtain at once, and allows his audience to form what ideas they best may, from what has gone before, as to the ultimate disposition of the various personages in whose fortunes they may have felt interested.

But the modern writer, unless he adopts the precedent afforded by the early fairy novelists—honoured by the authority of antiquity—of simply stating that everybody lived happy all the rest of their lives until they died, is usually expected, before he takes his leave of the reader, to give some little parting information respecting the

destinies of the different individuals who have figured in his pages. And so we will set this forth ; at the same time entreating the reader's indulgence for a short period before we part.

The latest advices we have received from Paris state that the last time Aimée was seen she was in a dashing cabriolet that whirled up the Champs Elysées one fine afternoon, on its way to the promenade in the Bois de Boulogne. Can it be possible that she had forgotten her old friends of the Quartier Latin, and found new ones? Oh, Aimée!

A Sydney newspaper came by chance into Mr. Ledbury's office a very short time back ; and in it Titus read that a married emigrant, named Rawkins, who had enacted the different positions of Hercules and the Gladiators, for a benefit at the Sydney Theatre, with great success, was about proceeding to some hitherto undiscovered wilds up the country, together with his wife, whom Titus recollected as formerly landlady of the retail establishment at the corner, from whence Jack Johnson and Prodgers procured their half-and-half in the early ages of their acquaintanceship. The reason given out for this proceeding was that Mr. Rawkins had received a call—but whether from a creditor or otherwise did not appear.

Nor was the great delineator of the statues of antiquity the only one of our characters who took up this line. For Mr. Roderick Doo having passed some pleasant months in confinement after his arrest, upon suspicion of coining, where the accredited barber of the institution paid but small respect to his moustachios, reappeared in a rusty black suit, a white neckcloth, with his hair cut very short, and in this guise made various morning calls. His object was at one time to solicit donations to the Jehoshaphat Mission of Aboriginal Illumination ; and at another, for the purpose of collecting subscriptions towards throwing open all the turnpikes in England for the benefit of the poor. Finally, he turned scheme inventor, having always some project in his head that would bring in a clear ten thousand a year, without one farthing risked or lost.

Mr. Prodgers is working hard at the up-hill labour of forming a medical practice, and has great hopes of ultimately establishing a first-rate one. The fifteen-shilling case terminated with great credit to himself ; and the old women, who collect upon the occasion of persons making their first appearance upon, or taking their final leave of, the stage of life, with such neighbourly pertinacity, speak of him as a clever gentleman. The Pill of Vitality is also still looking up as it proportionately goes down ; a penny loaf furnishing sufficient body for twelve boxes at threepence-halfpenny ; and he has thoughts of boldly opposing Mr. Koops at the next parish election, having been promised the support of one guardian and the porter of the work-house.

The Grimleys remain in the same house, and Miss Grimley also remains single, in spite of the district meetings and tract-delivery company. Her feathered pets increase as her chances of matrimony die off ; they are the small birds of prey who feed upon the remains of her decaying hopes. As a final struggle, she will next autumn try the effect of a match-making engaged against your-will boarding-

house, at a favourite watering-place on the south-eastern coast of Kent.

A few months back there was an awkward break-up, which nobody was surprised at, although everybody remained ignorant of the cause, in the establishment of the De Robinsons. A sale took place, which was numerous and fashionably attended, upon the premises; at which Mrs. Huddle was present each day, for the purpose of reporting the prices and purchasers of the most remarkable lots, the same evening, to a select tea-circle at Islington. The De Robinsons subsequently went to live at Boulogne for the purpose, as they publicly gave out, "of educating their family."

Johnson and Emma are, indeed, very happy. Jack has taken a pretty cottage at Highbury, where they now reside, and Titus pays them frequent visits, always accompanied by his flute, and sometimes by Master Walter Ledbury, who gets exceedingly tired and restless after twenty minutes in the parlour, and then is consigned to the society of Bob, between whom and himself there exists the warmest friendship. And Bob, to amuse his visitor, pitches pies innumerable, and dances hornpipes on his head, with a continuity only broken by the ringing of the parlour-bell, which he generally answers in an extreme state of excitement and demi-toilette. Johnson finds Mrs. Ledbury a kind and excellent mother-in-law; the more so because she had better sense than to invoke the first shade of domestic discontent by coming "to stay a little while with her daughter," giving her son-in-law the first grounds for supposing, perhaps erroneously, that he is under surveillance, however slight, and no longer a free agent.

Titus is the same kind-hearted creature as ever. His knowledge of the world is still far from being acute; but he always rubs his hands, and looks so happy at his sister's, that it does all their hearts good to see him. His sanguine mind is anticipating all sorts of merry-makings for the ensuing season; and at times he hints at the practicability of forming a general party to Paris in the autumn; but we have particular reasons for believing that Emma will not make one of it.

THE END.

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